SEPTEMBER 2021

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ORGASM *ON* EDIBLES

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Fast-Acting Edibles Are Perfect for a Quickie

Feeling the weight of 2020? Pump up sexy times with rapid-response edibles, for a more connected and orgasmic hookup

BY **MARY JANE GIBSON**

PHOTO BY **VOLODYMYR TVERDOKHLIB**

Everyone is struggling to find balance in this strange year. Covid fatigue has hit us hard—many of us feel cooped up, exhausted and stressed out. You know what alleviates stress? Orgasms. And what can enhance an orgasm? Cannabis.

For those of us who like to relax at the intersection of THC and sex, a recent development in the world of legal weed is changing the game: fast-acting edibles. In trying them out, along with a specialized journal to track and calibrate my sex-and-pot play, I've been happily broadening the borders of my pleasure.

According to Playboy's recent sex survey, people are having sex less often during the pandemic. A long, satisfying fuck seems like a lot of work in 2020. One solution: How about a quickie?

Speaking from recent experience, a fast bang with no foreplay can be exhilarating. Maybe one person climaxes. Maybe both. Maybe no one. Just investing a few minutes in each other's pleasure will spark an endorphin rush that will have you feeling better.

Adding weed to the equation can make things even hotter. Unsurprisingly, the Playboy sex survey found that the vast majority of respondents—75 percent—reported pairing sex with cannabis during lockdown. THC is a vasodilator, meaning it increases blood flow, so in addition to the euphoria or high you may feel from consuming cannabis, it can also enhance sexual pleasure. The new intimacy journal from Goldleaf outlines several ways to incorporate weed into your sex life and includes a log book. The idea is to document play and calibrate "couture stoned sex" experiences, as Sophie Saint Thomas, who co-developed the journal, explains in its foreword.

"When it comes to cannabis, there's not a one-size-fits-all model," Saint Thomas tells Playboy. "For me, it might be a 30 milligram edible taken an hour before sex. For someone else, it might be a joint they share with their partner after sex." As I was replaying my hot afternoon hookup in my head, I wondered what might best work for my own cannabis-enhanced quickie.

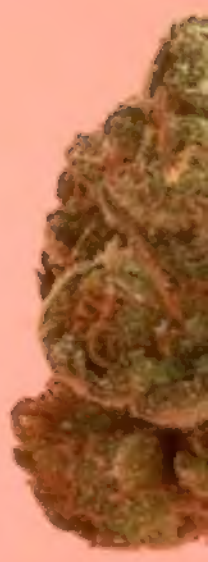
During the pandemic, I've been smoking way less weed than usual, instead using tinctures and edibles. But the long onset time of edibles usually rules them out as aids for spontaneous sex. Ingesting THC as an edible, rather than smoking or vaping it, creates a longer pathway to the brain, traveling through the digestive system and liver. It can take anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours to feel the effects of an edible, depending on your metabolism and tolerance.

Enter fast-acting edibles.

CannaCraft, a cannabis company based in Santa Rosa, California has a line of low-dose artisanal edibles under the label Satori. This year, Satori released fast-acting milk-chocolate-covered strawberries, each containing 3 milligrams of THC. An edible experience without the wait—how does that work? The nanotechnology the edibles use is commonly incorporated in vitamins and supplements, and reportedly improves the bioavailability of absorbed ingredients such as cannabis oil.

"Basically, it breaks down the cannabinoids into smaller molecules," CannaCraft brand manager Elise McDonough says. "When the edible hits your digestive system, it 'tricks' your body into absorbing it faster." Those who indulge may feel the effects as soon as 10 minutes after eating a Satori strawberry.

If you're nervous about getting overwhelmingly high, the significantly reduced onset time with low-dose edibles should allay some fears.



CannaCraft's director of new product development Matt Elmes, who has a Ph.D. in molecular and cellular biology, says the effects of fast-acting edibles also wear off more rapidly than a classic weed brownie. "It's a typical pharmacology principle," he says. "The faster a drug starts to affect you, the faster it's going to go away. Usually within a couple hours, you'll feel a full return to normalcy."

Negative experiences with standard weed edibles are all too common. (Remember when Maureen Dowd thought she was dying after she ate too much infused chocolate?) If you're nervous about getting overwhelmingly high, the significantly reduced onset time with low-dose edibles should allay some fears. You'll feel the full effects quickly and can adjust your experience accordingly.

When I sampled the Satori strawberries, I felt the familiar, pleasant warmth of THC spreading through my system in minutes. For me it worked best on an empty stomach, taken with a little water. I generally prefer lower doses, so the 3 milligrams of THC per chocolate was ideal. When I wanted to feel more, I just popped another in my mouth.

This brings us back to the quickie. Weed has been linked to an increase in more satisfying, easier-to-reach orgasms. Even better, cannabis can make you feel more connected to your body, your impulses and your partner. The blissful melting feeling I get from weed, along with the rush of heat from wanting my lover to fuck me immediately is like Pop Rocks for the soul.

Last week, just as I was about to log on for a midday Zoom meeting, I got a "Can we reschedule?" email, right as I heard my lover finish a work call. The gold Satori tin glinted in the sun. I grabbed my favorite cannabis-infused lube, ate two strawberry bites and walked into his office (a.k.a. the kitchen) to offer him a piece. We were naked so fast it was funny—and by the time we were fucking a few minutes later, we were high too.

KAYLA MARIE

Instagram **@kaylamarie523**

Photography by **Cameron Doane | @camerondphoto**
HMUA **@kaykalonmua**

Kayla Marie is a mod[illegible] and makeup artist based out of Florida. And don't tell anyone, but she is secretly also a ninja.

Describe yourself in three words
Ambitious, Adventurous & Empathetic

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Oh, absolutely. HI MOM!

What was it like starting out as a model? Honestly, pretty weird. The term "model" has always made me chuckle at myself. But the journey and memories have been so amazing, and I wouldn't change a thing for the world. I have met so many amazing people in this industry, and I don't believe I could have done it without such a supportive, strong team.

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far? Definitely learning to love me for myself. To be happy with where you are NOW. Be present and not compare myself to other peoples good days on social media.

Describe your perfect day off when you are not modelling? I am a huge introvert. So blankets, good food, my two puppies and Fallout 4 sound pretty good.

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person? So I'm definitely a city girl, however I do love camping, building my own fires, and learning survival techniques.

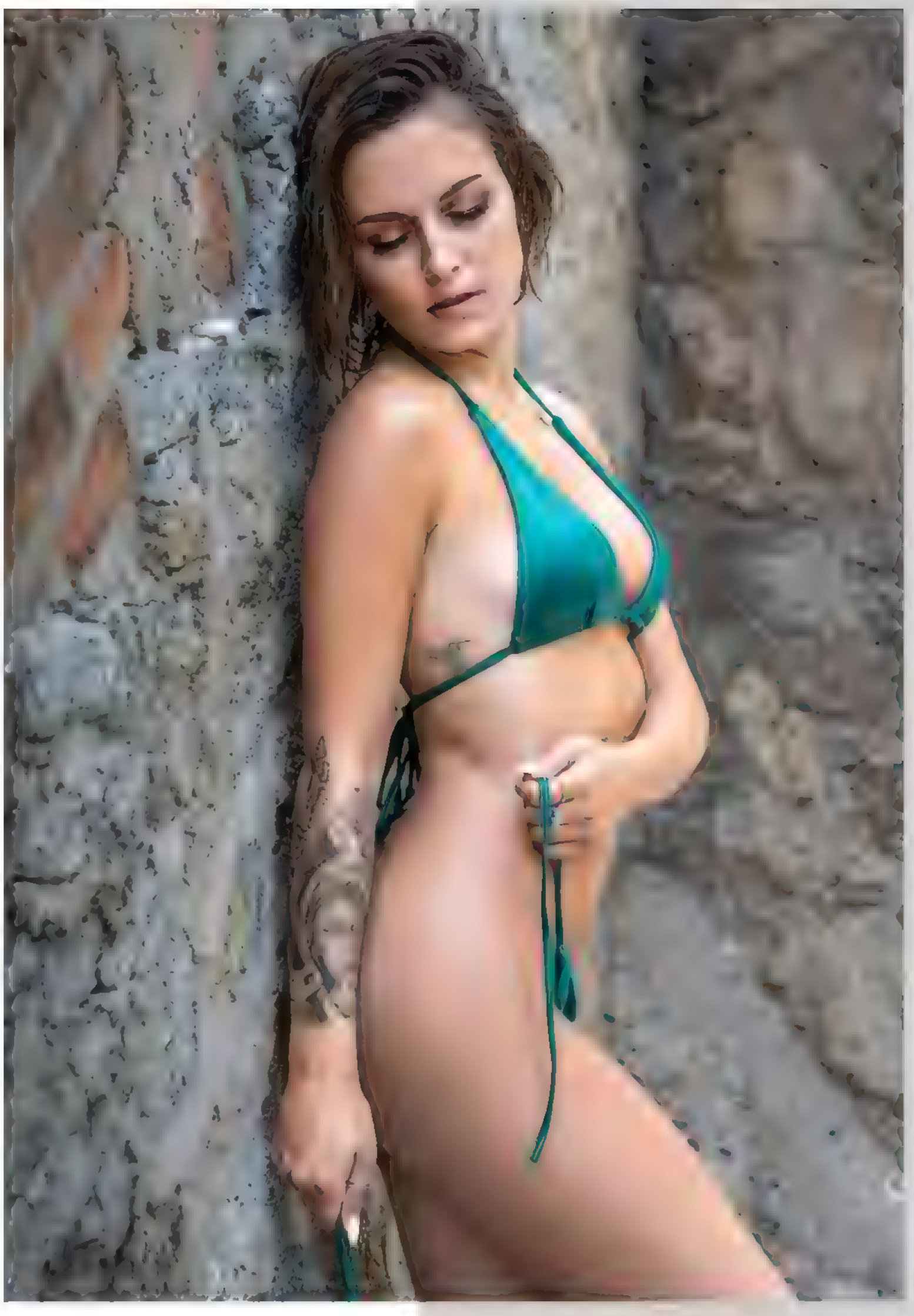
If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Somewhere in Tuscany, Italy. Without a doubt.

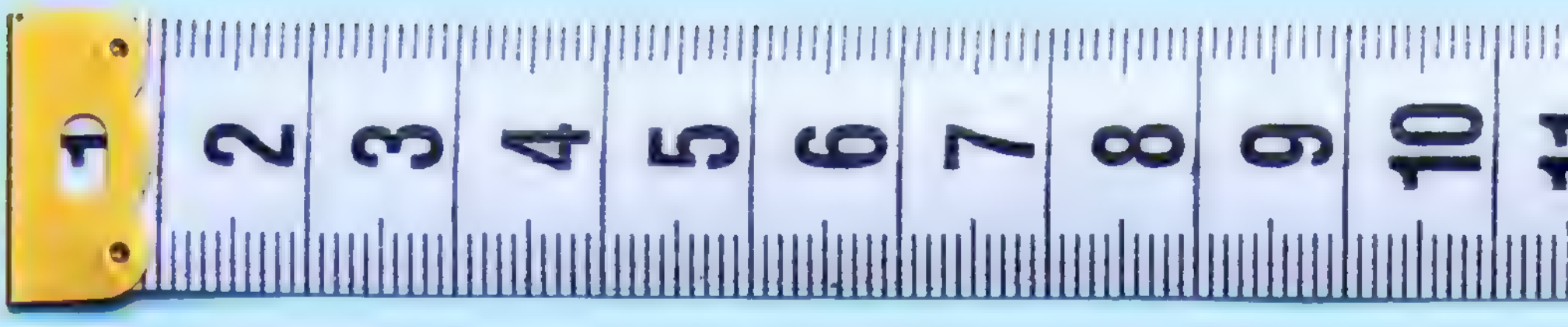
Do you have a secret talent? I can have a full conversation without actually opening my mouth.

A guilty pleasure? Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it? Monsters x James Blunt.

What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean? Amore, Italian for love.

Any last words you would like to share with the readers? "The public has always expected me to be a playboy, and a decent chap never lets his public down." - Errol Flynn





The Myth of Magnum Condoms

Size matters, but not in the way you think

You know what they say about guys who have big feet, right? They wear condoms that fit their cocks. No, people aren't saying that.

"If the shoe fits, wear it!" You're probably more familiar with that one. Can you imagine if you bought shoes two sizes too big in order to impress someone? That would be silly, not to mention a tripping hazard. So why buy condoms that don't fit your penis? I have a pretty good idea where the "bigger penis equals better sex" fallacy came from—porn—but I won't hold them solely responsible. The idea also stems directly from a lack of proper sex education. Penis diversity is never talked about—let alone different sizes of condoms.

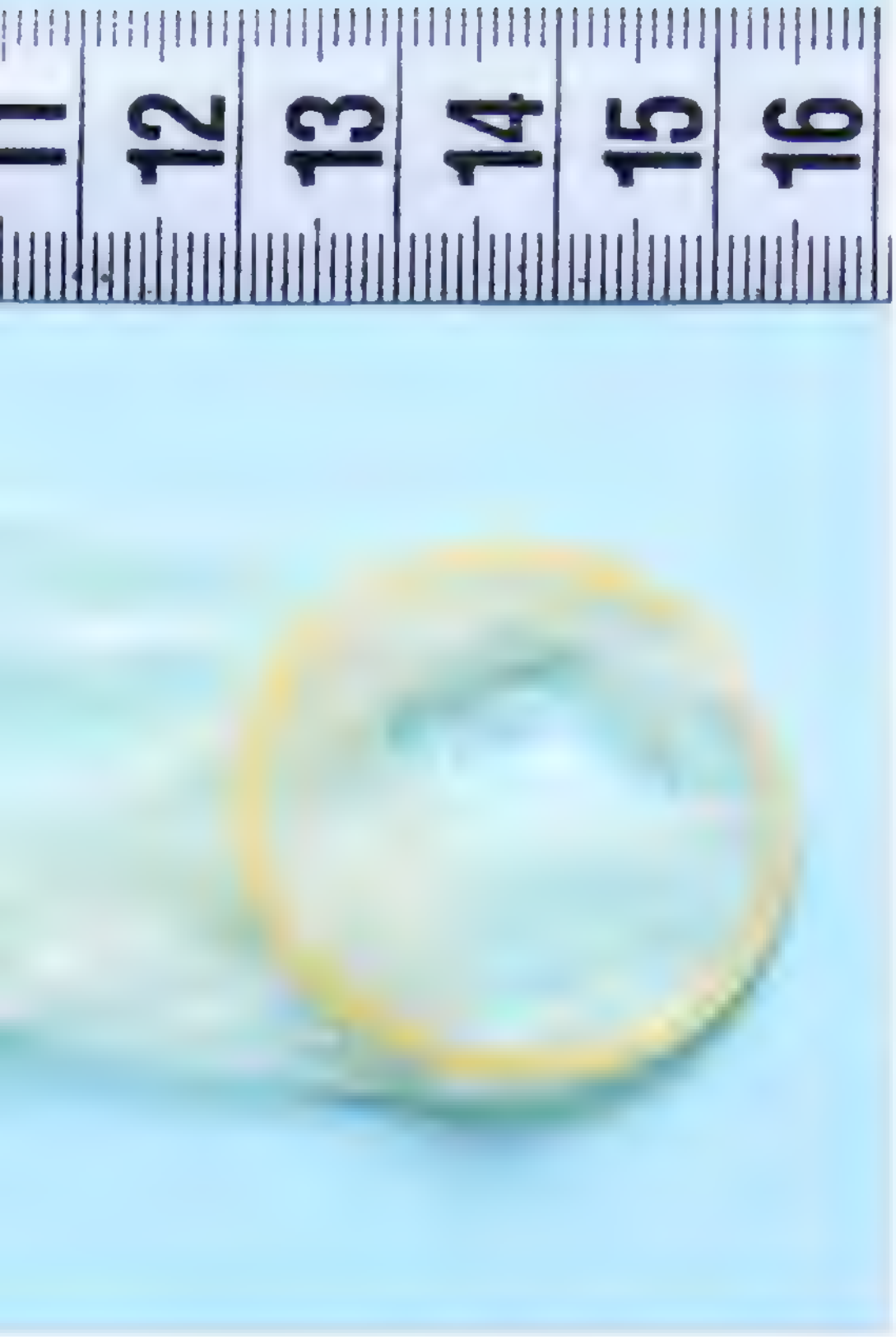
But before we get into that, let's talk about penis size.

A meta-analysis published in the British Journal of Urology International found that, globally, the average erect penis length is a little more than five inches—a bit shorter than the iPhone 6s. There are outliers, of course, but if we surveyed 100 penis owners, only about 15 would have penises longer than six inches and only five would have penises shorter than four inches. The average penis girth found in the study was 4.6 inches. With the magic of pi, we know that means an average of about 1.5 inches in diameter

Knowing your particular dimensions is key when selecting a condom. So how does one find the right fit?

Don't worry about asking to borrow your friend's phone that hasn't been upgraded since 2015 so you can measure your penis. The ideal measuring device is probably already in your house: a roll of toilet paper. This may have been a difficult task

BY **DR. MEGAN STUBBS** PHOTO BY **WHITE BEAR STUDIO**



If your condom looks like a sandwich bag on your penis, that isn't a good fit.

earlier this year (#Covid), but I'm confident you have one to spare. Make your penis hard and insert it into the cardboard tube. If it fits comfortably, you will likely do well with most standard-sized condoms. If it is a little roomy, you may want to explore slimmer-fitting brands. If it's tight or you can't fit your erect penis into the tube, you should consider Magnums and other brands of larger condoms.

Why does this matter?

When used properly, condoms are a great way to prevent pregnancy and STI transmission, so we want condoms to work the way they are supposed to. A properly sized condom fits the penis well, doesn't cause the user discomfort and doesn't break. If your condom looks like a sandwich bag on your penis, that isn't a good fit. Due to user error, many condoms' effectiveness rates are lower during real-life sex than when tested for breakage, and having poor-fitting condoms definitely contributes to those lowered rates.

Knowing the condom size that's right for you is great, but you also have to consider the variations of your penis. This is your permission slip to really inspect the specifics of your penis. Is the head particularly large? Is the shaft slim all the way up and down? Does it have a wider base? These factors can all impact how a condom is going to both fit and feel. Don't think, "I tried them once and they didn't work for me," or the classic, "I'm too big for a condom." If you watched my recent Playboy Advisor Live, you saw me put a condom over my entire forearm. If you're larger than that, we should chat.

Based on the numbers in the British Journal of Urology International study, it stands to reason that penis owners may need to explore more size options.

Let's review how to put a condom on a penis properly. First, make sure the condom isn't expired and the packaging hasn't been compromised. Open it with your hands—not your teeth!—and check the tip orientation of the rolled-up condom. It should be applied to an erect penis like a little hat, so you can roll it down with ease.

An additional option: Stretch out the condom ring before you put it on. Maybe a certain size almost fits you, but the bottom digs into your base. Give the ring a few stretches before you roll it on, which may help alleviate the pinching tightness at the base.

You can also add a drop of lube in the tip for added sensation. It really makes a difference! Now pinch the tip of the condom and roll it down the penis shaft until you reach the base. (Bonus points if you can do it with your mouth.) Now you can have fun!

It's absolutely okay to change up the brand and style of condoms you use. There are literally hundreds on the market. Whether you need a snugger fit, a wider one because you're particularly girthy or a larger reservoir tip for your head, I'm confident your Goldilocks perfect-fitting condom is out there. Leave your ego in aisle six and pick up the right fit for you. It's also okay if you are just now learning about condoms. Thank you for taking the time to invest in safer sex, and high-five to you for using a condom!

Top Four Tips for Responsible Cuffing

BY KELSEY EISEN

PHOTO BY TERO VESALAINEN

As a divorce attorney, I have essentially made a career out of shorting romantic love. When the pandemic hit, I told every colleague who would listen how much business we were about to get. Unfortunately for love, I was right. If absence makes the heart grow fonder, constant togetherness does the opposite. Much like Marie Kondo, the messes of others pay my salary, and this divorce boom has given me more material than ever to dissect all the different ways a relationship can go belly-up.

Navigating cuddle season in lockdown? If you want your relationship to survive and thrive, read this advice from a divorce attorney

The pandemic has not only exacerbated existing problems, but also introduced completely new ones. The usual suspects behind relationship trouble (think sex and household chores) loom even larger when you're together 24/7, while entirely new issues—like overhearing your partner's weird fake phone voice all day—are now added to the mix. As Covid cases surge worldwide, it looks like the situation isn't changing anytime soon. So in the name of love, I'm here to share my wisdom. Standard relationship advice aside (don't take each other for granted, and just split the damn household chores 50-50, for the love of God), below are my top tips for surviving pandemic cuffing season with your quarantine qutie.

Be Mindful About Sex

I can't tell you how many marriages I've seen implode due to one person's refusal to accept even slight libidinal differences in their partner. If I had a dollar for every shitty guy who's told his wife some version of, "Sex X times per week is the only way to prove you love me," and basically sexually bullied her into leaving him, I'd be halfway to a Peloton.

The thing is, it's unlikely that both (or all) members of a relationship will have the exact same sex drive. Stress can affect libido, and this moment in history is nothing if not stressful. Some people when stressed want nothing more than to get sweaty and forgetty; for others, that's the last thing they feel like doing. Scientific American recently reported that eating disorders, which have been shown to lower sex drives and generally increase anxiety around sex, have flourished during quarantine. Rates of depression and other mental health struggles are up too, according to the CDC.

So if your partner is feeling less interested in sex right now, don't take it personally or, God forbid, act resentful or unkind about it. Instead, focus on how this moment presents a great opportunity to create closeness in other ways. Which leads me to the next tip….

Explore New Types of Intimacy

Possibly the most common question I hear about pandemic relationships is some variation on, "How do we keep it fresh?" The people who asked were probably looking for an answer like, "Try anal!" But if the solution were as simple as a new position or toy, I'm guessing my friends would have already figured it out. Instead, I recommend experiencing your partner in new ways by breaking down usual routines and barriers.

We're used to compartmentalizing our different identities—friend, partner, employee, etc. In normal times, we have some buffer space to mitigate the whiplash of juggling these identities; a date night, for example, can help ease the transition from roommate to lover. But a major divorce trend I've noticed is that when one compartment "wins"—for example, if both partners focus only on parenting and neglect the lover part, or both are workaholics that bone regularly but neglect the friend part—the end is near.

To salvage the relationship, break down those compartments. Having trouble going from Zoom-work mode to sexy mode? Try hanging out in skivvies and just talk or cuddle, without bumping uglies. (This is also a great way to cultivate sex positivity when stress is making you feel anything but.) If you don't normally hang out in the morning, try heading out for an A.M. walk with your partner. If you're on that millennial wine train every night, try spending a sober week together.

Remember, time spent together isn't necessarily quality time, no matter how close your WFH stations are. Make time specifically to do new things with your partner. Breaking down our usual barriers can be hard, but remember, lockdown has obliterated

many of those already: The relationship must evolve or die.

Do Take Distance; Don't Take It Personally

Many couples are used to being emotionally together whenever they're physically together. But now that many of us are spending pretty much all our time with our significant others, it can feel like emotional overload. Creating room for emotional distance can be awkward, but it's key. Here's how to design a new routine with some built-in distance.

Start by paying attention to your partner's cues. If they say they are in the mood for a solo video game or to watch a dumb show they know you don't like, tell them to go for it. Cultivate solo things you enjoy (such as your own embarrassing show preference) to occupy yourself during that time. You could each set individual personal goals, like learning an instrument or finally reading that Hamilton book everyone pretends to want to read, then support each other in reaching them—but pursue them separately. You'll share the experience of working toward something, but get your alone time too.

Overall, work on being okay with being together but not together. Assert your need for space—even if your partner might get offended. A little initial discomfort while setting a new routine will pay off to avoid major resentment down the line. And if you can, invest in noise-canceling headphones. (Trust me, just do it.)

Don't Rush Big Decisions Because You're Bored

I cannot emphasize this enough: Do not get married or have kids just because you feel like there's nothing else left to do or it's the logical next step. I've heard many divorcing couples admit these motivations, and I fully expect big business in a few years from all the pandemic pregnancies and engagements littering my timeline.

If you find yourself on the cusp of a big decision that wasn't on your radar pre-pandemic, hold off. Don't have the baby. Don't get the puppy. Don't buy the ring. This also applies to the decision to enter or stay in a relationship. Repeat after me: Loneliness and horniness alone are not good enough reasons to get cuffed!

So there you have it. I could go on for hours about the common pitfalls to avoid at any stage of a relationship (seriously, give me a cocktail and I'll do it), but these are my top tips for the long months of lockdown ahead. Please cuff responsibly, and, if you don't, just remember that the average cost of a divorce in the United States is $10,000. Act accordingly, lovers!

I cannot emphasize this enough: Do not get married or have kids just because you feel like there's nothing else left to do.

Playboy Interview

Jim Carrey

A candid conversation with Hollywood's most serious-minded funny guy about spirituality, drugs, denial and how "The Truman Show" became reality

BY **MICHAEL FLEMING** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAVID ROSE**

With his head and his face bearing equal amounts of stubble, Jim Carrey arrives at his production company's office. He has just shaved his skull for a new role, and dressed in a black suit and white shirt he looks like a happy, prosperous monk. But the name on the door—Pit Bull Productions—reveals far more about Carrey's true nature.

Born in Toronto, Carrey had an uneventful childhood as the son of an accountant and a homemaker—until Dad lost his job and the family was left homeless and miserable. Carrey dropped out of school in 10th grade and worked at menial jobs to help out. He found better pay doing impressions on the stand-up comedy circuit. His harmless, permanently smiling persona translated to roles in such films as Peggy Sue Got Married and the short-lived TV series The Duck Factory.

The earlier hard times, however, had instilled anger and an edge in Carrey that eventually came out. Mindful that his father had been fired from a seemingly safe job, Carrey tossed out the mainstream act that had him opening for Rodney Dangerfield. He replaced it with a caustic, manic persona who went onstage without a set routine and punished his audience until

it responded sometimes with laughter, sometimes with debris. Keenen Ivory Wayans saw the edge as a strong match for his envelope-pushing Fox sketch show In Living Color and made Carrey the lone white male cast member in 1990

Carrey scored a surprise hit as Ace Ventura: Pet Detective and followed that with The Mask in 1994, another blockbuster, which instantly drove his price from $500,000 to $7 million a film. When Robin Williams vacillated on playing the Riddler in Batman Forever, Carrey jumped into the green suit and had his first global hit Next: a record $20 million to star in the 1996 film The Cable Guy.

Hardly content to be a rich guy who makes faces and talks out of his ass, Carrey rolled the dice again. His edgy Cable Guy villain darkened the film's tone enough to horrify studio execs (and audiences, who stayed away in droves). Still, the performance helped Carrey take a step toward serious films. In The Truman Show he played the unwitting star of a 24-hours-a-day reality TV show. Carrey then played quirky comic Andy Kaufman in Man on the Moon

The problem: Those serious turns seriously underperformed at the box office. In fact, 2001's The Majestic was enough of a bomb for people to start writing Carrey's career epitaph. The death notices were shelved when Carrey put on his funny hat again and delivered last year's top-grossing comedy, Bruce Almighty. What's an ambitious megastar to do? For Carrey the answer is to take the serious route yet again in his new film, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, a surreal drama about memory erasing that was written by Charlie Kaufman, architect of Being John Malkovich and Adaptation.

Michael Fleming sat down with Carrey just as he began working on the role of Count Olaf, the signature villain in the film Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events, an adaptation of Daniel Handler's kid-book series. The twice-divorced (most recently from actress Lauren Holly), now single Carrey was clearly getting into character. He seemed tightly coiled, partly because he doesn't like doing interviews and partly because he had decided to explain certain aspects of his personal life that he'd never talked about before—and he wasn't sure how his fans might react.

PLAYBOY: You've been working around the clock on your new film, and you've just shaved your head. Are you feeling overwhelmed?
CARREY: Not today. I just came off the beach in Malibu, near my house. It was the most beautiful day, except for that inevitable paparazzi triangulation.
PLAYBOY: Your Truman Show character has no privacy. Now, with the paparazzi following you, the same has happened to you.
CARREY: This country is getting us ready for The Truman Show. It's happening I feel a little scared and sad. They're slowly desensitizing us to where there's a video camera on every street corner Shows on TV are getting more like, "Ha! What a stupid guy, that Joe Schmo or whoever he is."
PLAYBOY: The Truman Show seemed cautionary in 1998 but now seems prophetic. On The Joe Schmo Show everybody was an actor except the unaware contestant. Joe Millionaire's contestants were duped into falling in love with a phony millionaire.
CARREY: It's all unbelievably cruel. I believe in making fun of things that deserve to be made fun of—lies, arrogance. These are things you want to rip down as a comedian. But when you take a guy who's a good-hearted human and you just go "Woo, woo, woo" behind his head, it's cruel
PLAYBOY: Even though they gave him a hundred grand?
CARREY: A hundred grand means nothing. What are you buying his humiliation and misery? It feels as if we're just desensitizing people to the point where it will be all right to take a baby and do whatever you want with it. Or to kill somebody on camera.
PLAYBOY: Meanwhile, celebrities get more and more coverage. How do you feel when you see an E! show consisting totally of people like yourself being stalked by the paparazzi?
CARREY: Unacceptable. Way over the edge, man. That channel is now eating its young
PLAYBOY: What do you say when they ask for an interview?
CARREY: I don't do it
PLAYBOY: What about the argument that it's the price of being rich and famous?
CARREY: I don't think that argument holds water. We should respect the people who entertain us and make us feel good—unless I'm acting like an idiot, which I'm not. I know they justify it in their heads, but it can't make them feel good. Unless they're drunk or stoned and completely fogging over their feelings, I know that in their private moments, when they're lying in bed staring at the ceiling, they can't feel good about it. Taking is taking and giving is giving. Period. There will be a reckoning in their lives.
PLAYBOY: What do you mean?
CARREY: There will be some kind of unexplainable disease, something that happens in your life that makes you go, "Why me?" And I'm here to tell you, it's because of the choices you made.
PLAYBOY: So you believe in karma?
CARREY: Absolutely, without a doubt. But this isn't karma; this is the truth eating you alive. You can justify things all you want, but every human being knows the truth. To follow someone around with your lens like a little sneak—it hurts your spirit on this planet.
PLAYBOY: Do you feel this strongly because you see yourself as a victim?
CARREY: I just feel it as a human being. I'm always looking at myself. I'm in no way perfect, but I'm always challenging myself to try to be better in what I eat and what I read. I've always thought that a higher level is possible, and I'm always looking for it.
PLAYBOY: When you played a guy with a split personality in Me, Myself & Irene, advocacy groups complained that you belittled the mentally ill. Isn't everyone guilty of insensitivity, even you?
CARREY: I wasn't trying to be insensitive at all. To me it was like a cartoon. I don't want anybody to be hurt by what I do. If that in some way hurt somebody, I'd feel terrible. But it wasn't intentional. Maybe that's the difference: I was being funny.
PLAYBOY: Do you understand the appeal of E! and other celebrity coverage?

CARREY: I'm not completely innocent here. I've indulged in it too. I watch those shows sometimes, but I know it's a disease. It's leading us down the wrong road, man.

PLAYBOY: You've done more than watch these shows. Before Man on the Moon came out, the media reported that, in character as Andy Kaufman, you got into a fight with Andy's wrestling nemesis, Jerry Lawler. Wasn't that a calculated press stunt to boost awareness for a movie that needed visibility?

CARREY: I'm not really allowed to tell you what happened, so either way I'm screwed. I think an interesting byproduct was seeing how little had to happen to put the media into high gear helicopters flying over the building, top story across the country. I sat in a hotel room watching and said, "Andy lives."

PLAYBOY: You talk about the entertainment media as if it were pornography.

CARREY: I don't know what my attitude toward porn is. I've studied a lot of Taoism. It talks about trying to find a higher place and not wasting your sexual essence, how these Chinese guys live to be 120 because they don't waste their essence. They might have sex, but they don't waste it all the time. I guess if you're going to squander your chi, the pages of Playboy are as good a place as any.

PLAYBOY: Squander your chi?

CARREY: There's a quote for you: Go ahead and squander your chi. But I guarantee you heaven isn't in Miss March's pussy. Sure, it looks good; it feels good. I have nothing against it.

PLAYBOY: Wait are you telling us you're celibate?

CARREY: Oh, no. I don't believe in that. I do believe in staying in balance. I'm not celibate, and I do masturbate. But not like a fiend. I believe in moderation. I think there's an energy source. It's like anything else: You can't eat cake all day long or you waste your energy. And you get gray, lose vitality. And I'm really good at sex

PLAYBOY: You are?

CARREY: Nah, I just thought I'd put that out there.

PLAYBOY: If heaven isn't sex, where is it?

CARREY: Heaven is on the other side of that feeling you get when you're sitting on the couch and you get up and make a triple-decker sandwich. It's on the other side of that, when you don't make the sandwich. It's about sacrifice

PLAYBOY: So it's about not indulging.

CARREY: It's about giving up the things that basically keep you from feeling. That's what I believe, anyway. I'm always asking, "What am I going to give up next?" Because I want to feel. It's been my drive since I was a little kid, actually.

PLAYBOY: Name something you gave up that gave you comfort.

CARREY: I don't eat wheat, I don't eat dairy, I don't smoke cigarettes, I don't smoke pot. All these things I've enjoyed. I live very sparingly.

PLAYBOY: It sounds a little monastic.

CARREY: It is, a little bit. But I'm an experiment, you know? That's how I see life. I'm not trying to put myself higher than anybody or anything like that. But I am my own experiment, and I love that. Physical health to me is my hobby. Psychology and spiritual life fascinate me to no end. When everybody wants to go to a rave, I like nothing better than to go home and read my books and say some prayers and meditate and try to break through. I'm always trying to breakthrough.

PLAYBOY: For how long have you been abstaining from these creature comforts?

CARREY: I have been struggling to do it my entire life.

PLAYBOY: But you're a wealthy movie star you're in a position to deny yourself comforts. Most people don't have that many comforts to begin with. They have overdue bills and abusive bosses.

CARREY: That's denial, man. That's like obese people lobbying to call their situation a disease. I don't believe it. God bless obese people, but they've got work to do.

PLAYBOY: So you've given up pot, too?

CARREY: I think people underestimate the power of things like marijuana, the addictive quality. It's not that the substance itself is addictive; it's the stimulation of the pleasure center of your brain. It becomes an easy way out, an instant vacation. That's addictive. I know people who have been stoned every day of their lives, for 50 years. They seem fine, but they are not getting to a higher level.

PLAYBOY: Like who?

CARREY: I hung out at the Comedy Store with Richard Pryor and people who struggled when they wanted to do it straight. I stood in a parking lot one night with Richard when he said, "I don't remember. I don't remember 40 years. I don't feel like I did it." And of course he did it But that's the trick. You can do it without that stuff. You don't need it if creativity becomes your high

PLAYBOY: You're telling us that when you're in your big house alone you don't sometimes think, Screw it, I'm going to eat a gallon of ice cream?

CARREY: I have moments. But mostly I stay on my thing. I might have one day a week when I go off and have a glass of wine. I'm not completely dogmatic. But I keep honing this thing, this experiment I fear that 90 percent of people are going to look at this and think, He's turning into a head case. I'm not. This is about my not wanting anything halfway.

PLAYBOY: You must have splurged somewhere.

CARREY: I've never been really decadent. Honestly, I don't put a lot of onus on the things in my life. I have things. I try to keep my life fairly simple. I have a plane, and that's an incredible luxury. But it mainly saves me so much stress because I travel so much.

PLAYBOY: Your own plane? That's a big comfort. How does that save stress?

CARREY: Not having to deal with the airports and the paparazzi, all that is involved with an airport. It's a worth-while investment in my peace of mind. I'm all about keeping myself in a healthy place so that I can go the duration, man. I want to make it to 120 years old. I've got a date to run a 10k on the Great Wall of China when I'm 90.

PLAYBOY: Some people might say that this is just a fad that during the next round of interviews for a movie you'll be pounding a Big Mac and supersizing.

CARREY: Or drunk at the Oscars, holding my genitals? I'd never say never, but if I was doing that at McDonald's, I'd just get back

on my thing. I always have. Each time I go off and have one of those moments, it's a shorter span of time before I get back on my game. I don't promise anybody that I'm perfect. This is just my experiment.

PLAYBOY: Do your friends think, Gosh, Jim, you're not as much fun to hang with since you've turned into this Amish guy?

CARREY: I'm not as much fun for somebody who just wants to get wasted. I'm too confrontational to be around. But I don't judge people. You want to get wasted? I'll pass it to you. Here you go. You're your own judge. I don't want to judge anybody.

PLAYBOY: You came up alongside comics who became stars and were overcome by excess. After John Belushi became a movie star, people around him wouldn't let him have a bad moment even if it meant feeding him drugs.

CARREY: That's bullshit. It was his fault. John Belushi was a strong-willed motherfucker who'd kick your ass if you told him how to live. This is the mistake people make. Why couldn't someone talk to Elvis? Well, good luck. You were out the door if you did. It's this habit we have of shirking our responsibility to ourselves.

PLAYBOY: Many comics, such as Sam Kinison, seemed to work best when they were standing on the edge of a precipice.

CARREY: Sam was in total denial. He created a beast he couldn't get away from. I'm not saying that's ultimately what happened to him. But I know his struggle. He was always going back and forth. He'd come up to me and go, "Hey, Jim! We're drug-free Christians, man." We'd laugh because I was always trying to be straight and healthy. Then he'd go on Howard Stern, and Howard would say, "You know, you're not funny when you're not stoned." And he'd be right back doing it again. And this is the trouble — when you create the beast, you've got to be the beast, you know? I've got enough of a beast in me, man.

PLAYBOY: You are a perfectionist. Does this come at a high personal cost?

CARREY: Sometimes I hate it. Sometimes I don't want to do it. Especially things like this. I twist for three days before I sit down and talk to somebody like you. How do I try to speak my truth in an interview like this, to describe this trip that I'm on, without coming off like a self-important asshole?

PLAYBOY: You just say what's on your mind and take your chances. People will respond, or they won't.

CARREY: I'm trying to make sure that I'm a lion who likes to act like a monkey and not a monkey who likes to act like a lion. Don't ask me to explain it.

PLAYBOY: You shaved your head for Lemony Snicket. Why not put on a skin wig?

CARREY: I don't mind being a bit of a freak while I'm doing a movie. It gives me an excuse. It keeps life interesting. It scares me a little bit sometimes, because it puts me in a certain place that bangs up against where I want to be in my life spiritually. When you try to live a good life, one of the things you don't concentrate on is "How will I be self-loathing today? How will I hate God's creation?"

PLAYBOY: Did taking on the roles of Andy Kaufman and his alter ego, Tony Clifton, take a toll?

CARREY: Oddly enough, that one energized me. I was so lost in that character that I wasn't myself. I looked at it like this: Let's not be an actor doing Andy Kaufman's life story. Let's be Andy Kaufman coming back from the dead to do his life story. When I came out of it, it was as if I'd had a vacation from being Jim Carrey. I didn't think as I think, I didn't act as I act, I didn't make choices as Jim Carrey. I had gone off the planet. It was probably how you feel when you die — you just go, "Ahhh, what a rest."

PLAYBOY: It's remarkable that you could lose yourself so completely.

CARREY: It was actually spooky at the end. I had to sit for about three weeks and ask, "What do I believe again?" I lost track of my own likes and dislikes. I do know that it's possible to program your brain. It really is. I've done it my whole life. Everything I have is because of a constant kind of brainwashing that I've done to myself.

PLAYBOY: You have been prescient. You wrote a postdated $10 million check to yourself when you were poor, and when the date came up you had the money to cover it. You told yourself you were going to be one of the five biggest actors in Hollywood, that every major director would someday want to work with you.

CARREY: Is working with me.

PLAYBOY: So you consider this approach to be pretty successful?

CARREY: The whole thing is all good brainwashing. Not "I'm going to do this," but rather "I am doing this." I've always said it in the present moment, as if it already exists. I may not be connected to it yet, but it exists. When people ask me about an Oscar, I try to be polite about it. But I've already won it. In my head I've won Best Actor.

PLAYBOY: For which role?

CARREY: I don't know what the role is. I want that to surprise me. I'm not being arrogant. I don't have some sense of entitlement. It's just that I've experienced it already. I just work this way.

PLAYBOY: Does that block out fear?

CARREY: It just seems to program the computer. If it's God's will as well, then it'll happen and connect with my thought. I fit's not, it won't.

PLAYBOY: What goals are you programming now?

CARREY: I have four more things in my wallet right now.

PLAYBOY: What are they?

CARREY: I can't tell you.

PLAYBOY: Come on, give us one.

CARREY: No. That's between me and God.

PLAYBOY: Are they professional or personal?

CARREY: They're career things, they're life things, they're spiritual things — they're everything.

PLAYBOY: You're not gearing for a run for governor of California, are you?

CARREY: Let's hope not. No, everybody would be in a lot of trouble if I did. I may do it in the movies, just so I can say what

I need to say.

PLAYBOY: You come from Canada but have talked about becoming a dual citizen so you can vote.

CARREY: I'm in the process.

PLAYBOY: Would you have voted for Arnold Schwarzenegger?

CARREY: I like Arnold. I have no idea how qualified he is. The whole power of celebrity in this country scares me, the idea that we trust this guy and feel we know him because he's in a movie. If he mentions his frigging movies one more time in one of his speeches, I'm going to vomit. Dude, you're a politician now speak about the issues. There is something dark and evil going on in the Republican Party that's just too frightening to get into.

PLAYBOY: Care to elaborate?

CARREY: I love this country. I came here from Canada with huge dreams, and America gave me everything I ever imagined and more. But I think we're in a lot of trouble. There's a lot of stuff that's going to hurt us. We might wake up one day and go, "Wait, we're the bad guy?" We've got to be careful

PLAYBOY: You mean the invasion of Iraq?

CARREY: I mean everything. Our business overseas. How we treat each other. Insensitivity to people, to other races and countries. God knows I feel for our soldiers. It breaks my heart that people are dying, and I appreciate that they protect us. But I wonder how far that $87 billion might have gone in showing goodwill to the rest of the world had we taken it and said, "How can we help you?" We might have won the hearts and minds of the Arab people.

I just hope Bush and those behind him have their hearts in the right place. We're there now. We have to see it through. If their hearts aren't in the right place and this is about oil, there's no bunker thick enough or deep enough to get away from God's bunker buster. I also believe we should stop writing cute messages on bombs. It isn't funny—it's cruel, and it doesn't do the soldiers any good. If we're going to write anything on a bomb, it should be "God bless whoever this lands on and may God forgive us all, on both sides."

PLAYBOY: Let's change the subject When you started out as a stand-up comic, what was your goal?

CARREY: When I started I wanted to please my mom and dad.

PLAYBOY: Yet you abruptly scrapped your mainstream act as an impressionist and replaced it with something much edgier and more unpredictable.

CARREY: Oh, I'd have a war with the audience some nights. I'd go to war.

PLAYBOY: Why?

CARREY: I just felt like it was my mood at the time and it was dishonest to give them anything else. So I would go to the Comedy Store and pull the guns out and start firing.

PLAYBOY: Did you have a plan when you took the stage?

CARREY: Sometimes I had no plan at all I went up six months in a row and told myself that I wouldn't repeat a word I'd said the night before. Every night was like death. I was bleeding with sweat before I'd go onstage, because I wouldn't allow myself to repeat a joke or a line. I went up there with nothing

PLAYBOY: What was the reaction?

CARREY: The comics thought it was incredible. They were all lined up at the back of the room going, "Do you know what he's doing?" Kinison would say, "You're not going to save any of that shit, man? That was funny shit." And I'd go, "Nope. Not gonna do it." It was brutal, and two thirds of the time it was absolute shit. I got chairs thrown at me, and I got in fights.

PLAYBOY: You had the added pressure of supporting your parents and siblings. That must have been tough.

CARREY: Well, yeah. It was hard when I threw my impression act out completely.

PLAYBOY: Why do it then?

CARREY: Because when you juggle for five minutes, they call you a juggler. That's it. Now, since I've developed other things, I can bring an impression back in Bruce Almighty I do Clint Eastwood It's fun, but it's not who I am.

PLAYBOY: Who guided you when you made that transition?

CARREY: My dad was really instrumental in the creative decisions I made. He was a jazzman, an orchestra leader.

PLAYBOY: Your father was also an accountant who lost his job. Did that show you the downside of playing it safe?

CARREY: For him it was a combination of fear and responsibility. He was a very, very good man. But I used to think my dad was a coward

PLAYBOY: Why?

CARREY: Because he was such a nice guy to everybody, and he got run over in life. He got fired when he was 50, and no one wanted him anymore. He was always the guy who would give you the shirt off his back, and I used to look at that and go, "That's not honest. It's not entirely honest to be the nice guy all the time."

PLAYBOY: Did you ever say that to him?

CARREY: Not really, no. It was who he was. He loved people and showed me nothing but love, and I could never look at that in a bad way. But you learn from your parents. What I learned was not just to give everybody everything they want. They don't know what they want. And they'll eat you up and spit you out without even meaning to.

PLAYBOY: What's the alternative?

CARREY: If I got into a place where I felt pigeonholed, I would do the opposite until everyone forgot what I used to do. That came from seeing how it turns out when you pander to people. You're asking to be kicked in the teeth.

PLAYBOY: You first made good money doing impressions as Rodney Dangerfield's opening act. Audiences liked you.

CARREY: I saw where it was going. I saw it leading to Vegas and opening for people. Or if you're Rich Little, you become the Impressionist Guy. God bless him, but it was not good for me. This soul is too big to be housed by that.

PLAYBOY: Dangerfield took you under his wing. What did you learn from him?

CARREY: More than anything, he supported my creative whims. When I stopped doing impressions and started spiking my hair

and doing weird things, he still hired me. He'd stand off to the side and laugh, and when I came off he'd say, "Man, those people think you're from another fucking planet." He's an incredible character. And he treated my father like gold, which was very important to me.

PLAYBOY: You've drawn clear lines about not discussing whom you date. Did you get burned?

CARREY: You do learn that if you're telling the truth it's going to piss somebody off. But the press knows. They know that the celebrities who stand in front of the paparazzi are, you know, half going, 'Just be cool. It's okay. This serves a purpose. It gets the publicity out," and half going, "These are the fucking people who follow me around! What am I doing?"

PLAYBOY: The attention defines some entertainers

CARREY: Yeah, there definitely are people out there who would do anything to get some publicity. I'm not qualified to speak for everybody. I'm kind of in rarified air. The main thing is, I just don't believe in meanness.

PLAYBOY: Comedy is sometimes mean.

CARREY: Sometimes I trip into it as a comic, but I have trouble reconciling that, too. Try to find a comic who isn't angry when he's 70. Why is George Carlin pissed off? He's brilliant. But the man is so angry it's getting unnerving. It's like he practically doesn't want to live on this planet anymore. I try to understand why that's happening, because I don't want that. I want to be a loving human being. I want to look at the world with joy and gratitude and see the things that are good about life.

PLAYBOY: Your newest movie is Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, which is about a couple who have their relationship erased from their brains. Why did you do it?

CARREY: What drew me is the idea that everybody has someone they'd rather erase: "Gosh, if I could just suck that out of my brain and my heart and never deal with it again, it'd be fantastic." Everybody identifies with that, has some relationship that hurts so bad that they just wish they could make the ghosts go away. You can't, of course.

PLAYBOY: The hardships you and your family endured after your father lost his job have been well chronicled. Would you erase that pain?

CARREY: Well, there was only one time when I felt something really horrible was going on. That was when we were all doing the job at Titan Wheels [a tire manufacturer]. The whole family was working. My dad was doing the night shift, and I was doing afternoons and going to school in the daytime. I saw it changing us, making us hateful and bigoted. I empathize with kids who go to school and can't understand or don't want to understand what the teacher is saying. I was so angry then, I just wanted to bash someone's head in.

PLAYBOY: Seriously?

CARREY: Yeah. I used to carry a bat on my cleaning cart. This factory was half Jamaican and half Indian — you know, Sikhs. Everybody had daggers and knives, and it was like a race war going on — I was in the middle of it.

PLAYBOY: What did they do to make you so angry?

CARREY: They'd taunt me. They'd pile their chicken bones two feet high in the corner of the cafeteria because they knew I'd have to clean it up. Or they'd take a shit in the sink. Constantly trying to push my buttons to the point where I walked around with a cleaning cart and a baseball bat, just waiting for my opportunity to crack a skull. It was bad. I wanted to hurt somebody. I was caught up in anger. So I get how that feels. I understand.

PLAYBOY: Would you be who you are now without those experiences?

CARREY: It definitely gave me an edge. And I don't think anybody is interesting on-screen unless they have an edge of some kind. There's a reason Russell Crowe is popular, besides being an excellent actor. The guy is an edgy dude. And all of us kind of live vicariously through guys who can bust some heads for us. I think an edge is interesting to watch. To have that, you've got to risk

PLAYBOY: In Living Color gave you your start, but it wasn't Saturday Night Live. Would you rather have done SNL?

CARREY: I never made it in the normal way everybody makes it. I tried out for Saturday Night Live. The day I auditioned I went over to NBC, and as I'm getting ready I'm going, "Am I meant to do this?" I got out of my car, and an NBC page was standing on the ledge on the 10th floor of the NBC building, trying to work up the nerve to kill himself. And I just went, "This isn't going to happen. This is not going to happen today." Because I read the universe all the time and generally get my answers real quick.

PLAYBOY: That could be taken as some kind of sign.

CARREY: Yeah, and all these news crews were coming out of the building. And this guy was shuffling toward the edge, trying to decide whether to kill himself or not

PLAYBOY: Did he?

CARREY: I don't know. I never heard. I went in. So the whole time I was in there I was thinking, Is he dead? Did he die? But I never watched the news. I forgot about it. That's how desensitized I was. It was all about whether I was getting on the show or not.

PLAYBOY: On In Living Color you were known as the white guy. Did you have any idea who'd be the biggest success? Surely it wasn't going to be the Fly Girl named Jennifer Lopez.

CARREY: God bless her, man. She went for it. That's a driven woman. Unbelievable how well she has done. Incredible. But she's paying for it big-time, too. I didn't really have any notions about it, honestly. Sometimes I'd talk with Damon Wayans, who by year three had started getting opportunities and was on the way out of the show. He was tired a lot of the time, and I'd say to him, "But this is it, man! We made it already." I was aware that this was a rung on the ladder, but I wanted to enjoy it. What if it wasn't? What if this was as high as I was going? So I worked it to the very last show. Probably a little desperately.

PLAYBOY: You've convincingly beaten the crap out of yourself in Liar Liar and Me, Myself & Irene. Does it hurt?

CARREY: I hurt myself on Me, Myself & Irene. I'd sprained my ankle during rehearsals in the scene where Renee kicks me in the mouth and sends me over the fence. So for the rest of the film, when I'm running after the car, jumping on the car and doing all this stuff — it's all with a sprained ankle. I still have scarring on my bones. I don't generally hurt myself that much, but there were a lot of bumps and bruises on that movie

And I was in hell in that Grinch costume, too. It was like knives were stuck in my eyes.

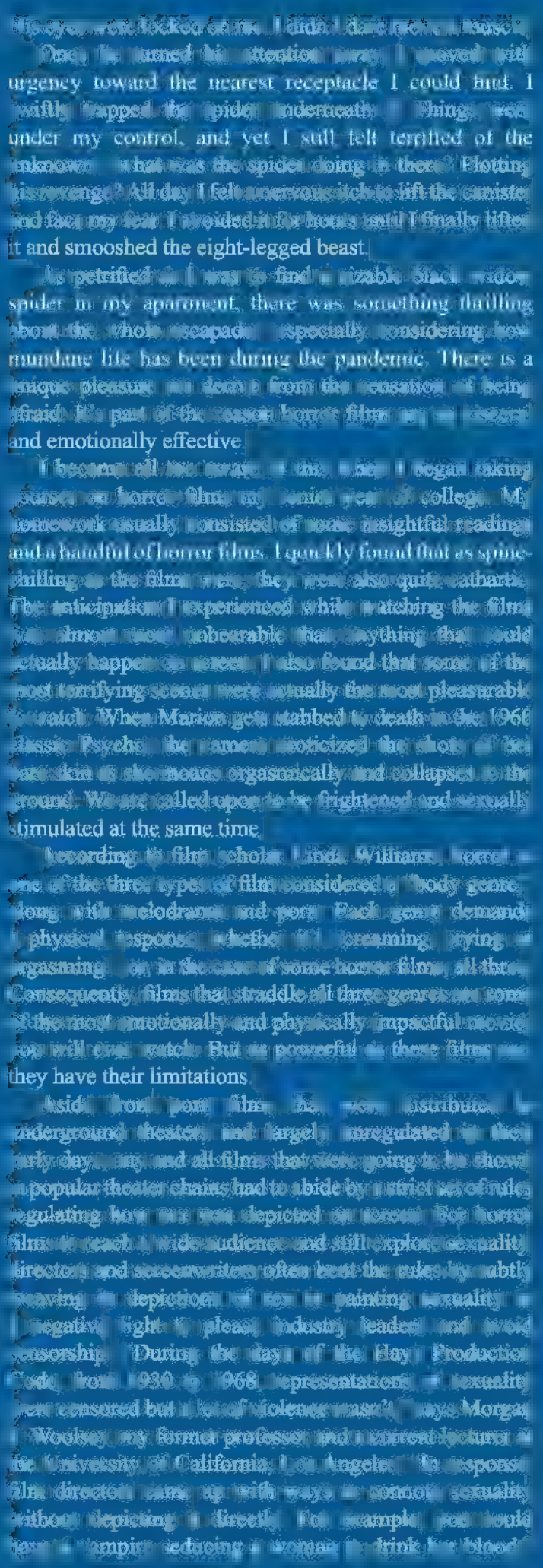
PLAYBOY: Because of the thick, colored contact lenses?
CARREY: Yes. It was just the worst situation comfort-wise you could possibly imagine. But still, when they said "Action!" I was free, you know? There's something about that suspended life moment When they say "Action!" I'm free.
PLAYBOY: You grew up loving Jimmy Stewart and played a role he would have taken in The Majestic. It didn't do well.
CARREY: It was a beautiful movie. I think what it missed was some humor. If you're going to do a hats-off to Frank Capra you've got to have the part when the gymnasium floor opens up and everybody falls in the pool and he's stepping on her robe and she's naked, jumping behind a bush. This film took itself a little too seriously. Too sentimental. It's odd when people go, "Well, how do you feel that this failed?" I never see it as failure. How can it be? This was 500 people working for four months. We turned on a town and gave them significance. I learned to be a better actor and met Martin Landau. Andy Kaufman? A frigging triumph! I don't think it was meant to do a lot of business, because Andy didn't do a lot of business. We were true to him and polarized the same people.
PLAYBOY: What about The Cable Guy?
CARREY: Huge success! It has become this weird cult movie. So much focus was put on the money I made, and people came gunning for it. It's not Shakespeare, but there's some funny shit in that movie, man. It was dark. The mistake the movie company made was to tell people it wasn't dark. The audience got surprised. It's a dark, psychological, in-your-face comedy. I felt I'd done something fairly brave and that we had huge laughs doing it.
PLAYBOY: You aren't big on sequels. Did it bother you when New Line cast a look-alike for Dumb and Dumberer, a widely panned Dumb and Dumber prequel?
CARREY: Yes, it did. It was an odd kind of compliment and an odd, creepy thing to do, to dress somebody up and try to pass him off as me. That shouldn't happen until you're dead, right? I felt for that guy. He did a good impression.
PLAYBOY: Would you coax your 16-year-old daughter to go into show business?
CARREY: No one coaxed would ever fucking make it. If she has a burning desire beyond belief to make it in this business, she'll do it. No one can make it otherwise. No way. There are too many fucking humiliating things. She's going to be accused of nepotism. But she has talent, and that will prove her or not prove her. She's really a smart girl with a beautiful voice. She'll make it if she commits
PLAYBOY: Having been forced to leave school for financial reasons, are you a stickler about her getting a degree?
CARREY: I want her to. I feel there's some kind of solace that comes with finishing things. I don't think about it so much anymore. I left halfway through 10th grade, but I read and I have a hunger for information and knowledge. Psychology has always fascinated me. One reason I love acting is that you always have to figure out where a character came from, what his parents did to him, what happened here. It's like being a psychologist of some sort.
PLAYBOY: You've been married twice; now you live alone. Do you miss having somebody around?
CARREY: It's less about that than about wanting to be real with somebody. I want to love somebody without walking around in a secret turmoil and feeling like I've been made to be something I'm not. Somebody I can be nakedly honest with that's who is going to win my love.
PLAYBOY: Given your current level of fame, how do you date a woman and know if she's responding to you and not to your stardom?
CARREY: Sooner or later the monster shows its face.
PLAYBOY: How do you know?
CARREY: I think we're all innately psychic. We're like dogs, man. We smell it. Sometimes we deny it, but we know it. We know when somebody loves us because they love us. I'm pretty sharp
PLAYBOY: Do you still go into relationships with an open mind, or are you cynical?
CARREY: The scariest thing for me is to change my mind and possibly hurt somebody. I don't think about being hurt as much as I think about possibly waking up one day and wanting something else and hurting that person. That's the fear, I guess. I want to have a lifelong love; I just don't know if that's real anymore.
PLAYBOY: Maybe you'd be a better husband now because you are less needy.
CARREY: I wasn't needy. I was perhaps not as tolerant as I could be. Perhaps I just picked people who were not good candidates to begin with, who weren't necessarily a good match.
PLAYBOY: Given your spirituality and your desire for dramatic roles, are you still a comic at heart?
CARREY: It is difficult because I've trained myself to be this comedic mind. That entails looking at something and deciding what's funny about it. What's funny about anything is what's wrong with it. So you're judging what's wrong with something or someone all the time, every day of your life. Down the line, that's got to take a toll. You can't end up being a happy guy if you spend every minute of your life going, "President Bush what a fucker!" You may think that from time to time—and I certainly do—but I also don't believe that he necessarily thinks he's doing something wrong. Some people can look at life and go, "That's the beautiful thing, that's the beautiful thing. Hey, there's a beautiful thing." And that's where I'm trying to put myself.

WE KNOW WHY HORROR FILMS MAKE YOU HORNY

Feeling scared and sexually aroused aren't mutually exclusive—they actually go hand-in-hand during Halloween time

BY TORI LYNN ADAMS

ILLUSTRATION BY OLLY JEAVONS



urgency toward the nearest receptacle I could find. I

under my control, and yet I still felt terrified of the

it and smooshed the eight-legged beast.

spider in my apartment, there was something thrilling

and emotionally effective.

and a handful of horror films. I quickly found that as spine-

stimulated at the same time.

they have their limitations.

As a result, horror films often encourage viewers to both fear and crave the action on screen.

When you feel horny and horrified at the same time, it's natural for the body to go into overdrive to process the competing emotions. Our emotions are primal, so although our bodies subconsciously know how to react to any given scenario, our brains may take some time to catch up. Horror films blur the line between fear and desire and cause us to respond in a more extreme manner.

To further complicate things, film directors often manipulate the gaze of their camera so the audience can relate to both the victims and the killers at different points in the film. The experience ranges from masochistic to sadistic depending on the gaze of the camera and the relationship viewers have to the people on screen. "The horror film allows audiences to be on both sides of this power and to move flexibly from one position to the other," Woolsey says. "There's something very BDSM-esque about that."

"There's an endless variety of eroticism in horror, just like there's an endless variety in what people find erotic."

Perhaps one of the more obvious ways power is employed on screen is in vampire films. From Dracula to Edward Cullen, vampires have often been portrayed as powerful entities whose sensual nature attracts women to their demise. The same is true for the vampires in the 1983 flick The Hunger, starring David Bowie, Susan Sarandon and Catherine Deneuve. It is seemingly impossible for mortal characters to resist the charms of the vampires they meet, but giving in to their desires always leads to a power struggle where violence, sometimes shown quite subtly, is inevitable.

Almost all horror films tap into our twisted sense of desire even if it isn't in the most obvious way. "Some of the classic slashers, like Halloween, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Friday the 13th, may appear to be devoid of sexuality, but this is just because actual sex is completely sublimated through violence," Woolsey points out.

Take Jaws for example. Steven Spielberg's summer blockbuster had people flocking from the beaches to the theaters, time and again. People were scared to go swimming during the summer of 1975, but they made repeat visits to theaters. The experience was simply too enthralling to resist. When John Williams's three-note theme begins and the shark approaches the boat, you can't help but brace yourself for the inevitable attack. Each time the shark swims away and lets them off the hook, you relax—but only briefly. You get tenser and tenser until finally the shark attacks and your expectations are met. Sound familiar? It's probably not too unlike your sexual climaxes.

You would be hard-pressed to find a horror film that doesn't tap into this uncanny relationship between our fears and fantasies. "There's an endless variety of eroticism in horror, just like there's an endless variety in what people find erotic," Woolsey argues. By tapping into that curious dichotomy, horror films demand our attention and force us to respond physically and emotionally.

In the real world, we are forced to abide by laws and social customs, but when we are plugged into a good horror film we can explore any and all taboos in a socially acceptable and safe 90-minute window, and come out the other side horrified, relieved and, if we're lucky, sexually satisfied.

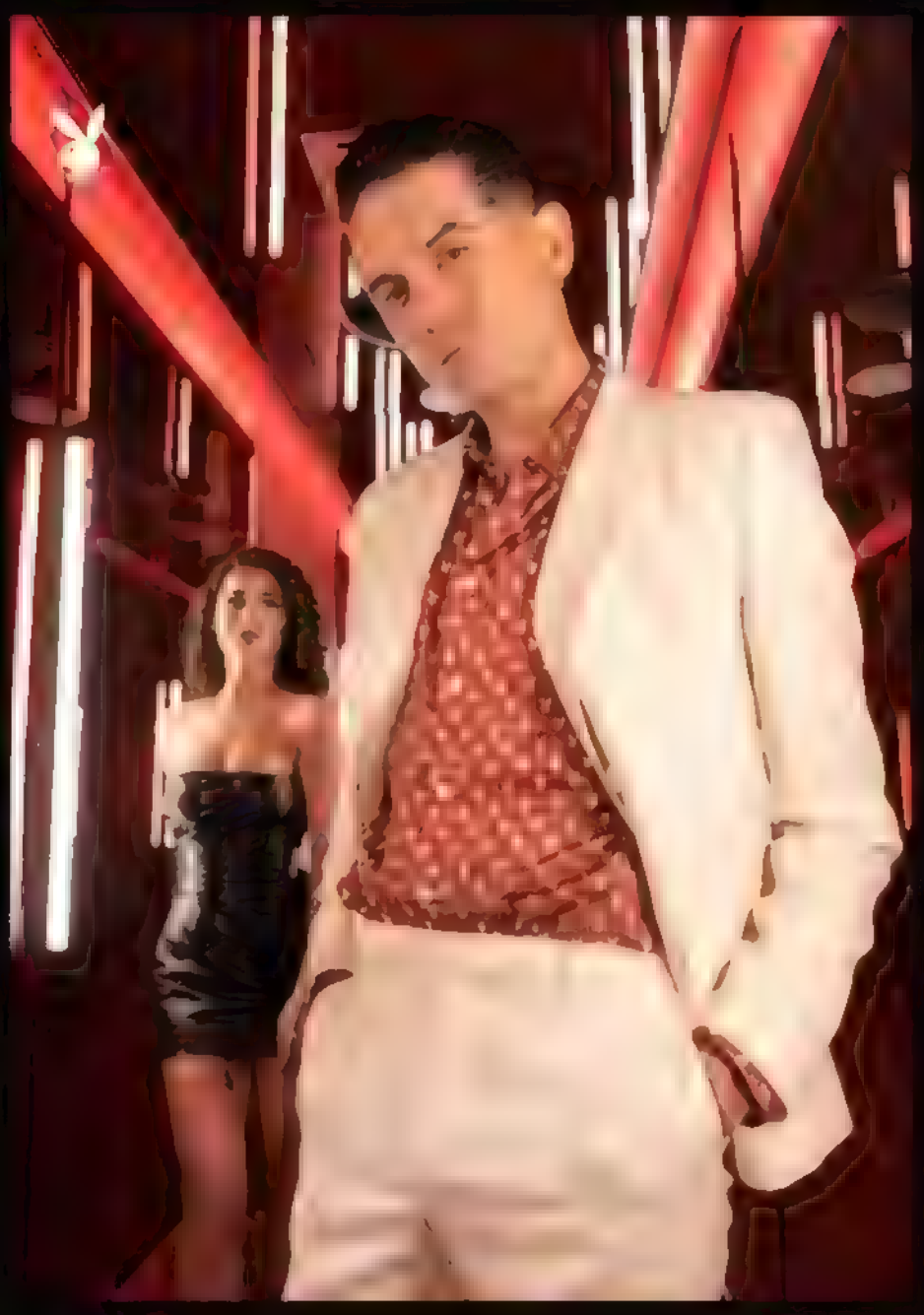
RUNNING WILD

Inside the talented mind of **G-Eazy**

Ever since his first album dropped These Things Happen in June of 2014 we always knew G-Eazy would become a household name, and, after many successful plays and hitting number 3 on the US Billboard 200, there's no denying the guy's got some serious talent - with no signs of him stopping anytime soon. But inside the mind of G-Eazy is something more complex, he's a bonafide creative and seems to always achieve what he sets his mind to. From designer gear to number one tracks featuring the freshest talent, the one thing that really stands out is G-Eazy's dedication. Here, we speak to G-Eazy to understand his art and the meaning behind his message, take a look!

Talent **@g_eazy**
Photography by **Joyce Charat | @joycevisuals**
Talent Booking **Emily Blair Marcus | @emilyblairmarcus**
Productions **Burgerrock Media | @burgerrockmedia**
EP/Manager **Matt Bauerschmidt | @2mattyb**
Model **Zoe Fioravanti | @zoefioravanti**

Creative Director: Irma Penunuri / @burgerrock **Production Coordination:** Emily Blair Media / @emilyblairmedia **Line Producer:** Pete Williams / @petewilliams **Photo Assistants:** Taylor Perez / Jhico Clemente /@ tslilab z **Groomer:** Kata Baron /@katamakeup **Styling Lead.** Anastasia Walker / @neoncomplex **Styling Assistants.** Damien Lloyd / @thedameeffect & Shonie Duet / @shonthebomb **Location.** Resorts World Las Vegas / @resortsworldlv



"I consider my self fortunate and blessed to have found what I love to do in life."

SHADD

Welcome G-Eazy, it's a pleasure to have you. Firstly nice job on the new track release 'Running Wild' ft Kossisko, "pretty faces love status," love that line. So, what was the inspiration behind the song? I wanted this new project to be a full circle experience from my first album *These Things Happen* and one of the songs that really raised its hand from that album was "Tumblr Girls", so it felt like the perfect song to sequel and share with the world after all this time. It was funny because initially that song wasn't even going to be on the album but everyone loved it so much that we had to add it to the album.

You've come a long way since the days of your first album These Things Happen (2014). What has your journey been up to this point and what have been some of the highlights? I consider myself fortunate and blessed to have found what I love to do in life, especially at such a young age. To get to do what you love for a living is extremely rare. Music has taken me all over the world and back a couple times over - I'm just grateful. That feeling is a big part of what this new album *These Things Happen* Too is all about. I started out with a vision that nobody else probably would have believed in, I fell in love with making music and believed in something, a dream that didn't exist yet. In high school, I was making my own beats, recording songs and teaching myself how to design album covers on a version of photoshop I downloaded on LimeWire. At college in New Orleans is where I met my managers Matt Bauerschmidt and Jamil Davis, and that's when I continued putting the plan together. We used to grind it out on early tours glorified road trips just trying to put together any type of momentum. We reinvested everything back into the business from shooting videos to just continuously hitting the road and eventually it paid off when I was able to open on tour for one of my idols - Lil Wayne. This is right after *Tha Carter III* so at that time, Wayne was completely on top of the world. On that tour is where I made most of my first album on the back of the bus... so that album was kinda symbolic of me approaching the industry/ the building/my record label from the ground level and looking up - so my new album reflects my current perspective from the floor I'm on now kinda looking back at my journey and how I got here.

Have you seen your style of music change over the years and who would you say has really influenced your personal evolution? Absolutely, I feel that change is only natural and I always want to experiment and grow in my craft. My influences range from Ye, E-40, Nina Simone, Amy, Nas, Radiohead, Chet Baker, Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, (etc, etc, etc...) I'm influenced by many genres and styles - and I don't have just one sound. So with this album, I wanted to touch on my many inspirations but also bring it back full circle - I never wanted to be put in a box and I've worked hard over the past few years for this album to be a reflection of that.

Three fav rappers of all time? Mac Dre, E-40, Jay Z, Nas, Ye, Drake, Em, Nas, Jadakiss, Andre, Cole, idk... I can't cap it at 3.

We love the blog G-Eazy.com, by the way, especially the gear, and the booking information is very useful. Do you manage the blog yourself cause you've done a really good job about it, very organized? Haha, I appreciate that. Nah, I don't manage it myself but I'm tuned in to all the design and look/feel of my overall brand from the videos, to the merch, etc... Sometimes I'll just see someone wearing a shirt and send a pic to my creative team who can help reinterpret it through my lens.

Your last album The Beautiful & Damned came out in 2017, then there was the EP in 2019 and we couldn't help but notice you mentioned 'These Things Happen Too' on your Instagram, are you currently working on a new album we can look forward to? Yeah, it's been a long time since my last album and I kinda took a detour of creative self-expression during quarantine to learn piano, start producing again and find my singing voice. I feel like it's sometimes hard when you've gotten this far in your career to just add a whole new element to your game but that's what I tried to do during COVID. I went from never having spent more than a full week in my house to quarantining for over a year so I just poured myself into giving my all to this album. I've been working tirelessly on it for the past four years and luckily the world will get to experience it soon... it's been too long.

When fans see a performer on stage we don't really think about all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. I mean, you've got a bachelor's degree in arts, do you think having that background helps you better understand the music you want to make? I've been around the arts my whole life. My parents are visual artists and my aunt and uncle were in a band so this just felt like my natural path. College was a long time ago now but I've never quit studying music and my craft. I'm also hungry to keep learning and improving. But yeah, I don't think people really know how much goes into getting the production just right, the whole mixing process and then once the song is done, rehearsing with the band and just figuring out how to bring the songs to life on stage in both an audio and visual sense.

You've worked with some of the masters in the industry from a diverse range of artists. Who would you say still inspires your music and creativity? Off the top, my sensei E-40. I grew up on him, but just watching the way he's stayed relevant and active through all these decades is the most inspiring. He's probably the most prolific ever at his level. Outside of rap though, I listen to a lot of other stuff. As far as production goes, I draw a lot of inspiration from film scores, Danny Elfman, Hans Zimmer, Clint Mansell, etc...

You did a collaboration for Good Life with singer Kehlani that received more than 13 million YouTube views in its first month... How was that experience cause now it's sitting well over the 300-million mark, which is really impressive... I think Kehlani's one of the greatest artists of our generation, her talent is undeniable. But yeah, I love the connection between movies and music so it was dope to get to work on the song for the movie and see it roll during the end credits. I was lucky enough to bring her out on her first tour years ago so it's hella cool

"Change is only natural and I always want to experiment and grow in my craft."

Shirt – Vintage
Pant – Vintage
Blazer – Vintage
Jewelry – Crown Collection

"I fell in love with making music and believed in something, a dream that didn't exist yet."

to keep watching her flourish and keep growing into the superstar she is.

You're young, in your prime, and an inspiration for upcoming talent. If you had to be remembered for one thing, what would that be and why? Having sex and making music.

Do you think the industry has changed over time, like are people more concerned with making money at the cost of making really good music? I think every generation has always feared that "real music is dying"... Most people don't like change, but I think it's completely natural to have those feelings. The intersection of art and commerce will always be tricky. At the end of the day though, I think quality and substance will always find a way to cut through the noise and stand the test of time.

Have you noticed you can't put a price on creativity? You'll see the simplest music video telling the most amazing story. Do you have any favorite music videos at the moment? Nah, that's totally true, I mean one of my favorite videos that I've ever put out is "Been On" and it's a really simple video. It's really more about the ideas than the budget.

If you had the chance to work with any one musician, present or past, who would it be and why? Kanye. Or Flea.

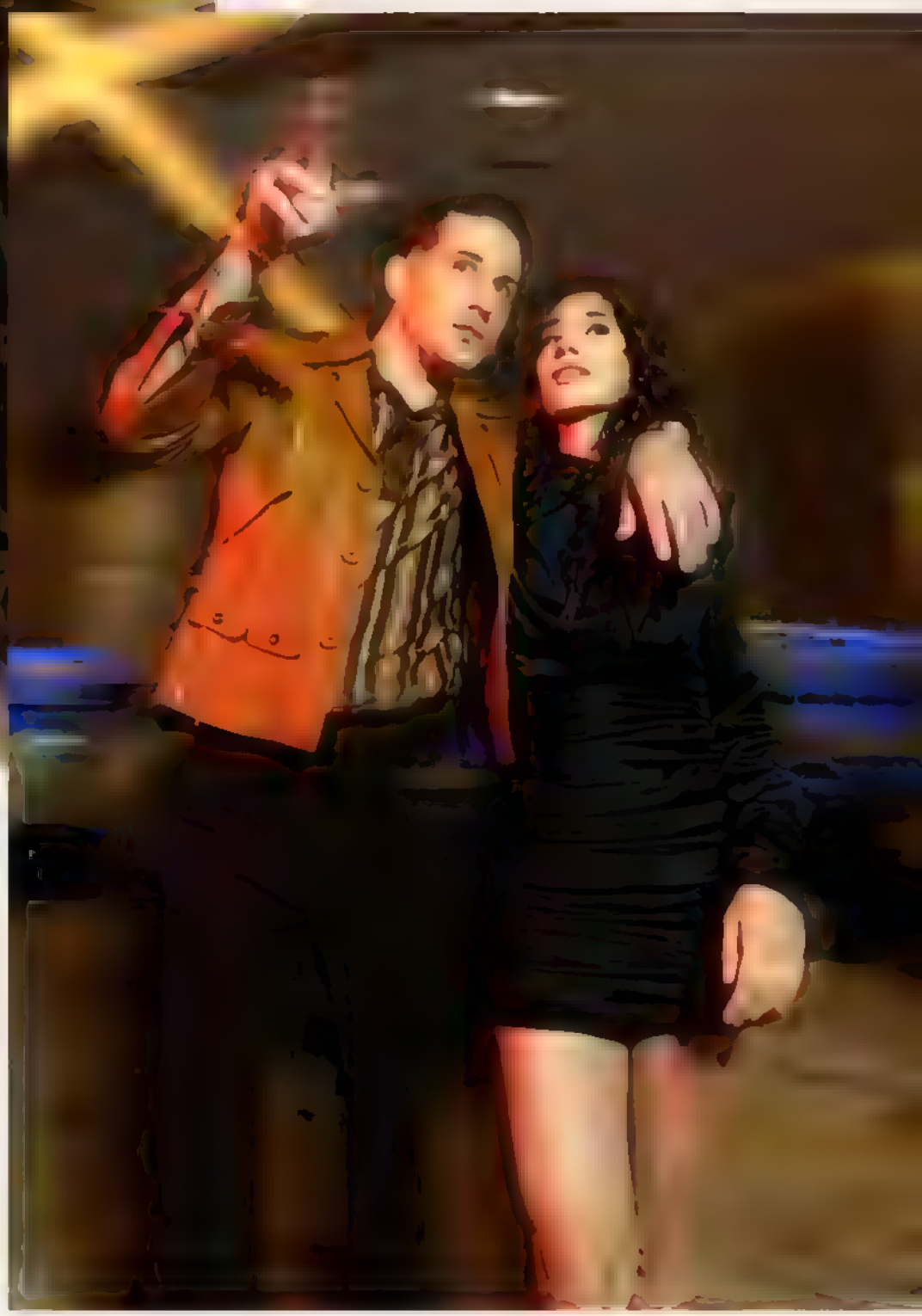
Aside from your tour calendar do you have any new projects or events you're currently working on or promoting at the moment? *These Things Happen Too,* coming soon.

Also, what is the best place for fans to keep up to date with your schedule? My website G-Eazy.com and my socials @G_Eazy...

What was it like shooting for Playboy, what's the inspiration behind the shoot and do you have favorite moments from the photoshoot? It was epic! Definitely a bucket list kind of moment. We shot everything in Vegas - I wanted it to feel timeless and classic, a lot of the initial inspiration came from the movie Casino.

Playboy is known to only feature females on its cover but has made an exception for legends like Hugh Hefner and now you. How does it feel to make such a breakthrough move in your career and were you hesitant? Not hesitant at all, I felt like this was a legendary opportunity.

Top Saint Laurent
Blazer Saint Laurent
Pant Rick Owens
Jewelry Crown Collection



"I think every generation has always feared that 'real music is dying'..."

Jacket Vintage
Shirt Vintage
Pant Gucci

GIVE ME MORE

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

PHOTOS BY
CHARLOTTE RUTHERFORD

The democratization of consent. The freedom to communicate what you want to do or what you want done to you. The art of lying back, letting go and edging closer to getting off. Do you feel that? Do you want more? Feel it tingle, taunt, touch and take you into another universe.

Pulling back the curtain on the beauties of BDSM

This euphoria is deeply interwoven in the acts of BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism), the craft of making sex as compassionate and consensual as it is captivating. If we want to become a truly sex-positive society, we need to engage with one of the few sexual subcultures that take sex positivity seriously.

"We—especially men have been socially conditioned to avoid pain and submission," explains Domina Colette Pervette, a San Francisco–based dominatrix. "But the lines between pain and pleasure begin to blur in the state of heightened arousal."

The conflation of BDSM with perversion remains the biggest misconception the practice faces. Strange, given that one must be an excellent communication to partake in kink; if you can't talk about it, you aren't ready to be blindfolded, whipped, chained or cuffed. "There are no assumptions in BDSM. Everything has to be negotiated," says Pervette

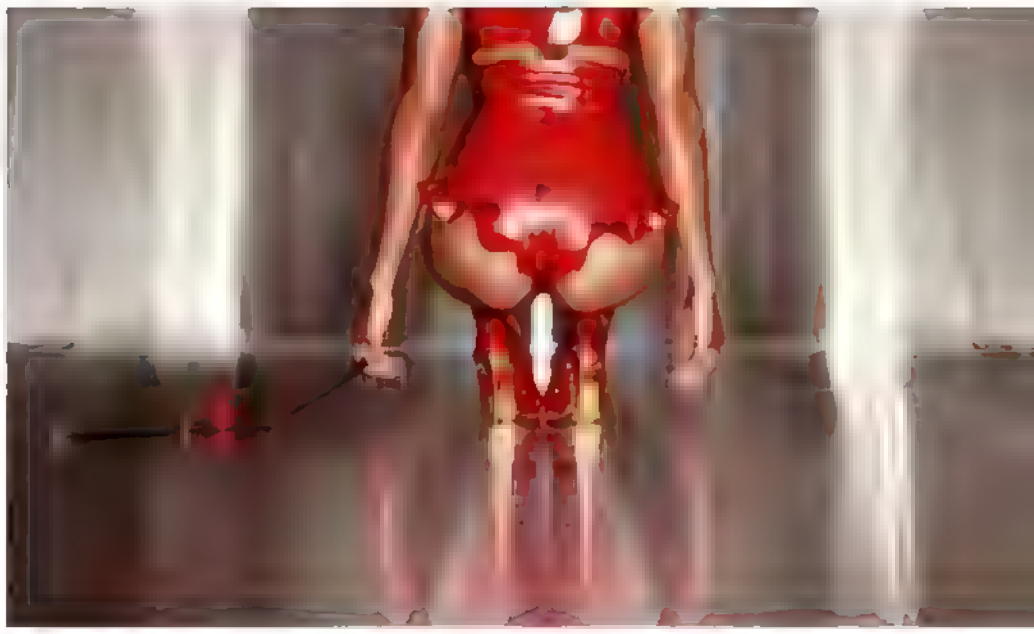
"The first hour is all about communication," says Argent Lloyd of his practice of shibari, the art of Japanese rope bondage. "I want to share this space with you, and you're giving me permission to put my hands on you."

Despite the BDSM community's history of promoting respect between partners, practitioners have often been thrown into the same bucket as predators. Until 2013, the practice of BDSM was classified as a disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders alongside pedophilia and bestiality.

March 2019 Playmate Miki Hamano

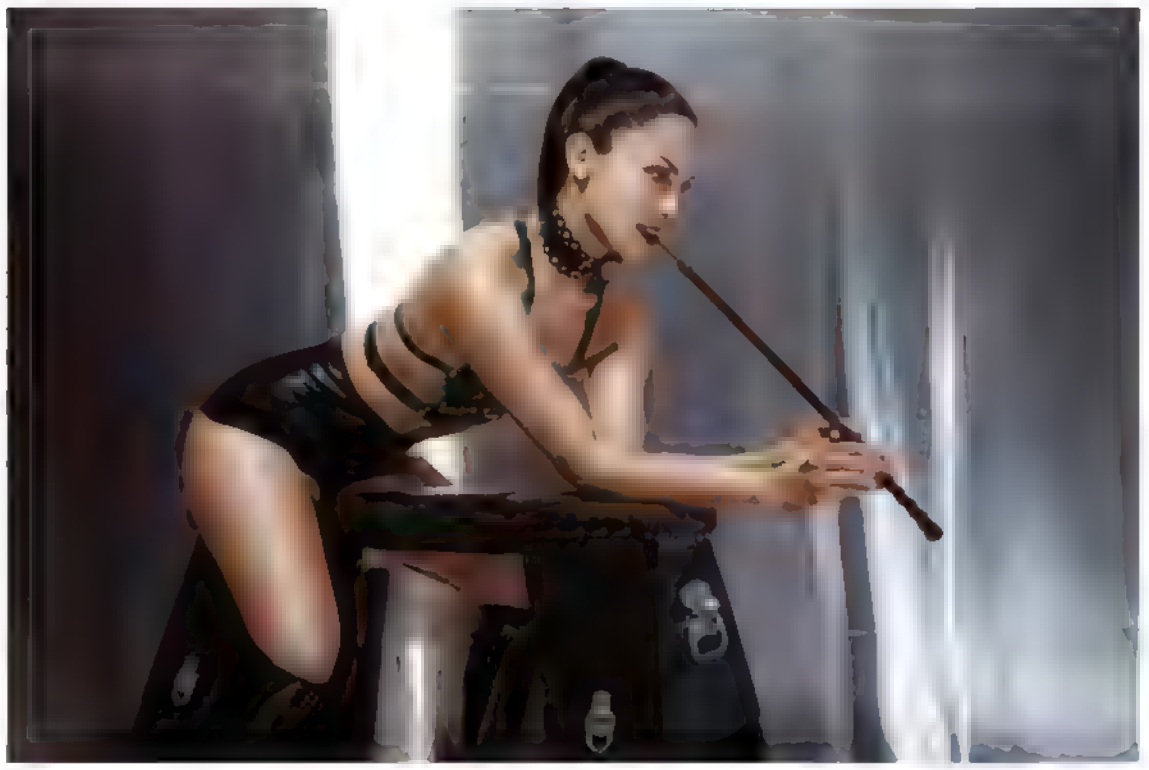
Susan Wright, founder of the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, works to change how the mental health community understands kink. "So much of what we focus on is educating professionals. They are the gatekeepers," she says. According to Wright, in 2008, 124 parents approached the organization because their BDSM preferences were being used against them in family court. After the NCSF successfully campaigned for clinicians to update the DSM, that number had dropped to 20 parents by 2018.

What's more backward about kink-shaming is how much the vanilla could learn from the kinky. Lucky for us, appreciators of kink are coming out of the closet. This includes celebrity ambassadors: Adam Rippon wore a leather harness to the 2018 Academy Awards; Michael B. Jordan and Timothée Chalamet followed. This isn't an E.L. James fantasy; this is reality. And our world needs it. "People often forget that BDSM is just another way of connecting with someone," says Pervette. "How we as a culture accept BDSM is indicative of how open we are to the expression of sexual freedom overall."

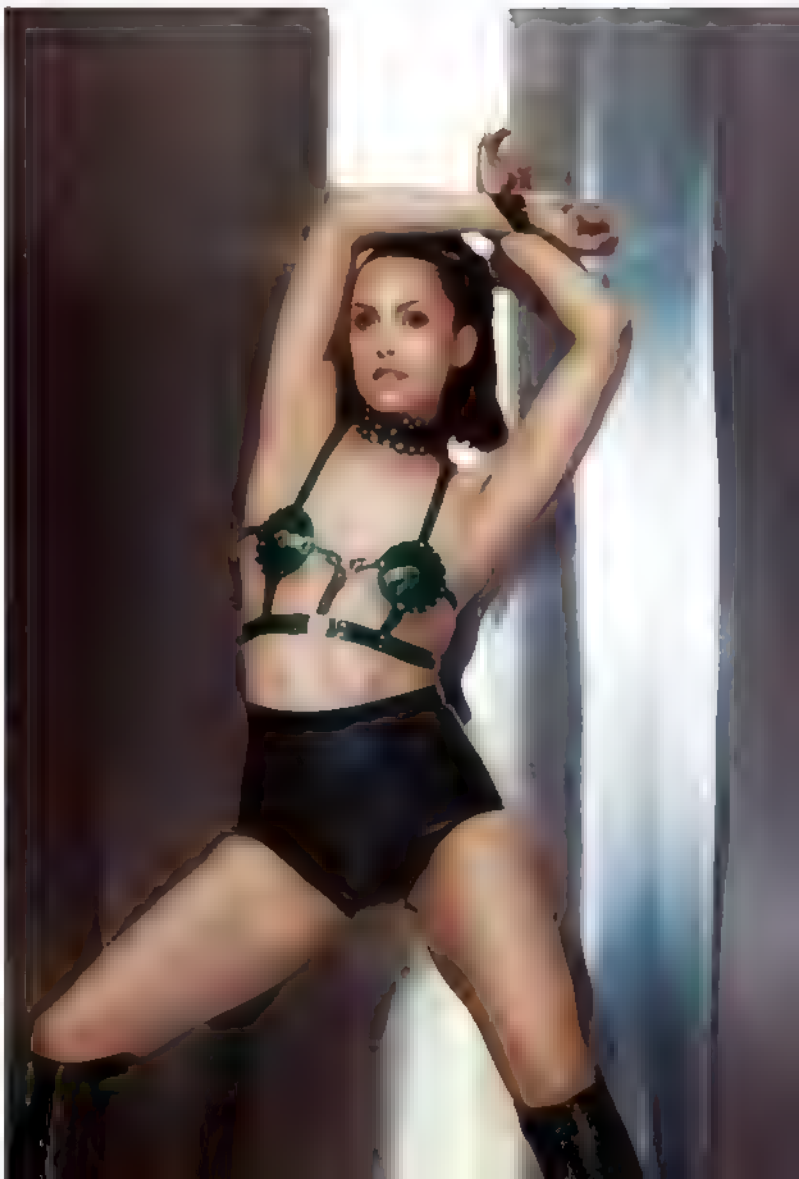


September 2018 Playmate Kirby Griffin

February 2016 Playmate Kristy Garett



2013 P aymate of the Year and April 2012 Playmate Raquel Pomp un



The Road *to* America's Liberation Will Always Go Through Philly

A Pennsylvania native writes about how the tireless resistance of Black, Latinx and Muslim communities tilted the state toward Joe Biden

BY **IMAN SULTAN**

PHOTOS BY **RMV/SHUTTERSTOCK**

On a dark winter night in early 2016, my friends got into a bar fight with Trump supporters. I was a 20-year-old student at Temple, a public university in Philadelphia, and the bar was a regular haunt for students and local residents alike, embedded in the streets surrounding the decidedly urban campus. A place of safety, I would often step into the bar for a quick bite to eat or grab drinks with my roommate and her boyfriend at two in the morning. Trump had not yet been elected president, but he was leading the polls in the primaries, and the racist rhetoric we heard on television became real to me in that moment. My friends had been attacked by white boys in red MAGA baseball caps in a city that always voted Democrat and is populated mostly by people of color. We were no longer safe, and the fight signaled the looming fascist violence increasingly normalized by Trump's ascent to power.

Even before he dropped executive orders banning certain immigrants or incited violence against Black Lives Matter protesters, Trump's rhetoric fanned the flames of neo-Nazis that had previously been relegated to the anonymity of internet forums and paved the way for hate crimes and harassment against racial minorities. Although my friends had defended themselves, Amine Aouam, a Moroccan immigrant at my school, was hospitalized after being attacked in early 2016; he said the assault happened because he was speaking his native language of Arabic. More recently, white vigilantes terrorized Black Lives Matter protesters after George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police in May, circling around buildings nobody intended to loot and beating up protesters. On-duty police officers enabled their intimidation by defending or ignoring the vigilantes.

The emboldening of violent white vigilante groups became a signature of Trump's presidency, particularly when Heather Heyer, a 32-year-old waitress and paralegal, was murdered while demonstrating against a neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017. Thus, it was no surprise when Trump supporters rolled into Philadelphia for the 2020 presidential election, and the city was pinned by experts as a site of potential election violence. Although Philadelphia is a stronghold for Democrats and hasn't elected a Republican mayor since 1947, parts of rural and suburban Pennsylvania, disparagingly referred to as "Pennsyltucky" by locals, tend to favor Trump. Most Trump supporters appeared to come from out of town, poised to declare Biden's lead a fraud and violently provoke activists, city residents and passersby. A bomb threat was issued near the Convention Center where votes were being counted.

Philadelphia hangs perpetually in a negative peace, a gritty city that cools the class and race tensions simmering underneath its surface with a hard, survivalist attitude. Philly people don't cede any ground; they take it instead. And there isn't much that fazes someone from Philly, the poorest big city in America with the highest incarceration rate of any large jurisdiction, which has had the country's second most homicides, after Chicago, so far in 2020. We're inured to almost everything, because we've seen it all. But sometimes the cracks burst open, spilling all the contradictions of American society like blood from a thinly bandaged wound. I've seen it before. Flash mobs of Black youth have taken to the streets, denigrating the gentrification that escalates police presence in their neighborhoods, and riots after George Floyd's murder collectively expressed the city's disdain for the everyday violence and injustice faced by its people.

Just a week before the election, Walter Wallace Jr., a 27-year-old Black man, was shot dead by police. Wallace, who was mentally ill, had been holding a knife, and instead of de-escalating the situation, the police opened fire.

Wallace hailed from West Philadelphia, where my parents lived when they first immigrated to America in the 1990s. It's remained iconic for Will Smith's "West Philadelphia born and raised" line in the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air theme song. Although West Philly has become gentrified over the past couple decades and encompasses the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel campuses, it is still a majority Black area with a unique history of activism. Paul Robeson, a star athlete and actor who was blacklisted during the McCarthy era for his socialist views, spent his final years in West Philly, and his house is preserved as a museum on Walnut Street. In 1985, just a few blocks from where Wallace was killed, the headquarters of MOVE, a Black liberation group committed to eco-justice, was fire-bombed by the Philadelphia police, killing 11 people, five of whom were children.

Just as the people of Philadelphia face routine oppression, resistance, too, is in the city's bones and psyche. Hundreds of people marched demanding justice for Wallace, and the National Guard was called in for the second time this year, patrolling the streets like predators. I remember my days as a racial justice activist in 2014, not long after Mike Brown had been killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri, sparking the first wave

There isn't much that fazes someone from Philly, the poorest big city in America. We're inured to almost everything, because we've seen it all. But sometimes, the cracks burst open.

In an election filled with voter suppression and threats of violence from Trump supporters, the city's victory for Biden resulted from the efforts of community organizers, grassroots activists and volunteers.

from the efforts of community organizers, grassroots activists and volunteers. It isn't a coincidence that the protests for Wallace funneled into defending the city against potential aggression from right-wingers, although supporting Biden triggered mixed feelings in many people who felt uncomfortable with the president-elect's role in the 1994 crime bill. Nevertheless, native Philadelphians' allegiance to the Democratic Party is a near guarantee every election. Hazim Hardeman, an academic who lives near 52nd street in West Philly, says: "The community [in which I live] is essentially all Black, and the majority lean heavily toward the Democrats."

Philadelphia, after all, is the birthplace of America, home to the Liberty Bell and the Betsy Ross House and the site where the Declaration of Independence was signed, freeing the settler colonies from the reign of their British overbears. And yet the underbelly of America marginalized by the Founding Fathers has always existed parallel to the mythos of this country's conception, even if it remains shadowed by the mainstream. It is fitting then that Philly should help swing an election against the 21st century's fascist-in-chief. Just as Philadelphia anchored the beginning of America, any meaningful revolution in this country will start here too.

fueled some of the most intense militarization residents had ever

visited Iraq in 2010."

dancing in the long, waiting hours of the night.

Willie Nelson's Vision for the Future of Hemp and Wellness

Expand your self-care routine the Willie way: good sleep, enough water and daily hemp

WRITTEN BY **CHLOE OLEWITZ**

PHOTOS BY **NORMAN POSSELT / FSTOP, JOHN FORSON ON UNSPLASH**

Country music legend Willie Nelson is known for having two things within reach at all times on his tour bus: something to smoke and a hot cup of coffee. So it came as no surprise when Nelson decided to launch his own weed-focused brand in 2016 Willie's Reserve became the embodiment of Nelson's beliefs about citizens' rights and responsibilities when it comes to weed in the United States, offering various THC-laden products, from prerolled joints to vape oils.

As Nelson expanded his interests from weed to hemp (a member of the cannabis family grown with less than 0.3 percent THC, the compound that gets you high), it was only natural that a new business venture followed. Through his newest company, Willie's Remedy, Nelson's passion for cannabis bears fruit in the form of an "everyday hemp" brand that uses the full range of nonintoxicating cannabinoids derived from hemp in a diverse array of products, most notably a first-of-its-kind whole-bean coffee infused with CBD that marries Nelson's love for cannabis and coffee.

Prepared according to the brewing instructions, a typical cup of Willie's Remedy coffee serves 15 mg of CBD, comfortably within the dosing range many canna-brands recommend for typical recreational use. The goal is to join the calming, anxiety-reducing properties of CBD with the natural energy boost of caffeine. The result is a more balanced, longer-lasting lift, as opposed to the crash-and-burn effect of caffeine that can bring on jitters and anxiety.

That balance is what keeps Elizabeth Hogan, vice president of brands at Willie's Remedy's parent company, GCH Inc., drinking the coffee throughout the day. "You get all the uplifting energy and extroversion that people look for from coffee, but the edginess or anxiety that sometimes comes up with too much caffeine is totally taken down," she says.

Before Willie's Remedy officially launched at Nelson's annual Fourth of July Picnic in 2018, many of the performers that hung out backstage or visited Honeysuckle Rose, Nelson's famous tour bus, became informal taste testers. "A lot of guys come back to say, 'Wow, that's the pre-show drink I need!'" recalls Hogan. The idea of CBD-infused coffee as an alternative to the liquid courage of tequila shots, for example, points to the everyday hemp lifestyle the brand espouses.

When Nelson announced he'd stopped smoking in 2019, word spread that he had quit pot. It made a juicy headline, but the idea was ridiculous. Nelson told San Antonio's KSAT at the time: "I have abused my lungs quite a bit in the past, so breathing is a little more difficult these days and I have to be careful." Lung health is a serious concern for any singer, and certainly for an 87-year-old one who has talked openly about putting his body through the ringer. But quitting smoking doesn't have to mean quitting cannabis

"Eating, drinking, adding it to your daily routine—it's another way to get the endocannabinoid system firing," Hogan says. Having nonsmoking options—whether a dose of CBD in your morning brew or munching on THC edibles—facilitates that range of choices. Nelson never quit pot, and smoking has never been the only way to consume weed or hemp. Today, in a world ravaged by a virus that attacks the lungs, alternative methods for cannabis consumption are more appealing than ever.

Nelson's goal is to introduce various avenues of consumption that will help people implement hemp as part of a daily wellness routine. Scientists increasingly accept the endocannabinoid system's role in regulating homeostasis in a number of major organs and biochemical processes, from the brain to the endocrine system to the immune response to energy levels. Why wouldn't you want to support the system that balances out the body? The brand imagines everyday hemp as another item on the list of things we already do to take care of ourselves, such as drinking water, sleeping well and getting exercise.

Although this isn't the only CBD coffee product on the market, it was the first fully infused whole-bean coffee (compared to preground coffee coated in oil). During the traditional coffee roasting process, each bean's natural oils travel to its surface. Then as the beans cool, they reabsorb those freshly released oils. Hemp oil is introduced directly into the roasting drum while the raw beans are being heated, so it can then be absorbed back into the roasted coffee beans along with all their natural oils.

"Today, in a world ravaged by a virus that attacks the lungs, alternative methods for cannabis consumption are more appealing than ever."

A now-discontinued decaffeinated option never took off, but consumer demand inspired the team's turn to tea. They have launched six caffeinated and caffeine-free varieties brewed from leaves infused with full-spectrum hemp oil, in a similar process to the coffee bean infusion. Beyond brews, they also offer tinctures in four strengths and a topical CBD balm.

As the brand's official chief tasting officer, Nelson is deeply involved in the process of bringing every product to market. "But do you know who decides what makes it to Willie Nelson?" Hogan asks. The answer is Annie Nelson, Willie's wife. It was Annie who brought the idea of hemp-infused coffee to the table in the first place, and she still curates the hemp applications the team tries, tastes and experiments with.

Yes, Annie is married to Willie, and yes, cannabis is a part of her daily life. But while Willie takes a no-holds-barred approach to weed, Annie actually isn't a big fan of getting high. It's not that she has anything against smoking weed, she just prefers to commune with cannabis in other ways. Before Willie's eponymous brands existed, Annie had spent years experimenting at home, cooking up all kinds of cannabis concoctions from both weed and hemp

In addition to being highly involved in product development, the Nelsons also take an active role in destigmatizing the use of the plant. Willie has been vocal about his support of cannabis from the start and has paid the price at times—he has been arrested for possession and pulled over various times for searches of his tour bus. After decades spent touting the benefits of weed and championing legalization, breaking into the business with his own brands was personally meaningful for Nelson. His advocacy is part and parcel of his legacy, and his justice-minded priorities are baked into both the Reserve and Remedy brands.

Nelson and his team refuse to lose sight of the sheer number of people who are imprisoned for selling a commodity that cannabis companies now trade in legally. That fact drives their push for legalization, which could reverse decades of unjust incarceration while also opening the door to funded research into cannabis as medicine. Meanwhile, because cannabis and coffee are both plants grown in the ground, they are both impacted by the global realities that farmers face, from issues of racial justice to the threat of climate chaos.

That's how sourcing became one of the ways the company turns ethics into action. Their beans come from coffee farm cooperatives in Colombia and Nicaragua that are dedicated to serving their local communities, creating opportunities for farmers and supporting women entrepreneurs. On the CBD side, they use carbon-dioxide-extracted full-spectrum hemp oil sourced from independent Colorado farms that employ organic farming methods.

It's a mouthful, but hyper-precise labeling also feeds into the brand's mission. They believe in building a safe environment for consumers, and in the wild west of CBD, that starts with education. They want transparent and honest labeling to become standard practice so consumers can know how much of each active ingredient they're getting and see exactly how each product was made. It comes at a cost, but they see empowering consumers as a necessary step toward reframing hemp as an element of wellness instead of as a ploy for corporate wealth

[illegible] of Willie's Reserve, a[illegible]notha[illegible] CBD brand with [illegible] name on the can, but decades of advocacy and [illegible] has made Nelson a reputable and respected leader in the industry. Nelson has also spent his life medi[illegible] and [illegible] celebrate of each new day.

"[illegible] with [illegible] and [illegible] a legend [illegible] Hoge said. "When [illegible] with Willie and talk with him about cannabis and all of its [illegible] this plant."

REMEDY
PYRAMID BAG
REMEDY
PYRAMID BAG
REMEDY
PYRAMID BAG

Yasmin
OLIVAS

Instagram **@yasmin.olivas_927**

Photography by **Nino Batista | @ninobatista**

I'm a Texas country girl. I like to dance, workout and live life to the fullest!

Describe yourself in three words: Brains, Beauty, Bootygains.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy? Yea I was super excited to shoot for Playboy.

What was it like starting out as a model? It was fun! I started out admiring models then I became one.

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far? I'd say getting my workouts in as I have asthma and a lung tumor I run out breath easily.

Describe your perfect day off when you are not modelling? On a perfect day off I'll go for a run in the morning then to the gym and end the night working a promo event.

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person? Country.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Europe.

Do you have a secret talent? I'm a dancer.

A guilty pleasure? Dark chocolate.

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it? I can't breathe – Parker McCollum

What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean? Fuck lol, it's used to express annoyance, contempt, or impatience.

Any last words you would like to share with the readers? I can't wait to be a Miss Playboy Bunny!

Playboy Interview
Spike Lee

A candid conversation with the outspoken actor-director about being black in America, sounding white on the streets and causing trouble everywhere else

BY **ELVIS MITCHELL** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **RANDY O'ROURKE**

There are many logical places you might find a famous director, writer, producer or actor in a bungalow office on the studio back lot, poolside in Bel Air or maybe at a prominent table at Le Dome. But if you're looking for the most successful hyphenate in movies—a man who is the writer, producer, director and star of a series of commercially and critically successful films—forget Hollywood and head for a renovated three-story firehouse in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn.

The fact that Spike Lee has chosen to oversee his burgeoning show-business empire from Fort Greene, his childhood home, is simply one example of his fierce independence. He demands complete control over his often controversial movies, such as Do the Right Thing, School Daze, She's Gotta Have It, Mo' Better Blues and the upcoming Jungle Fever. He directs and stars in a string of Nike commercials with Michael Jordan. He directs music videos. He oversees books and documentaries about himself and his films. He's starting a record company. He owns a store—Spike's Joint—that merchandises every conceivable type of paraphernalia based on his movies.

"Spike is first and foremost a damn good businessman," says actor-director Ossie Davis, who played Da Mayor in Do the Right Thing and Coach Odom in School Daze. But Lee is

much more than that. With his movies, he has clearly raised the consciousness of Hollywood toward black filmmakers and, more importantly, he has shown that black-themed films can be both commercially and critically viable. But Lee is not satisfied with putting blacks on the screen; he is a vocal advocate for getting blacks jobs behind the scenes as well He stipulates in his contracts—whether for movies or commercials—that blacks be hired, often in capacities that have not been available to them previously. He insists, for instance, that black artists do the posters for his movies and he has built a loyal repertory company of actors and crew, some of whom have been with him since his days as a student filmmaker.

Probably no movie director since Hitchcock has become so immediately identifiable to the public. Part of that fame stems from Lee's acting, both in his films and in commercials. But Lee, 34, has also positioned himself as a spokesman on a variety of racial issues. Vogue dubbed him a "provocateur," and he seems dedicated to living up to that image.

Shelton Jackson Lee—who was nicknamed Spike by his mother is the eldest child of a middle-class Brooklyn family. His mother, who died in 1977, was a teacher who demanded educational excellence from all five Lee children; his father is a musician who has written the scores for most of his son's films. Lee was the third generation of his family to attend Morehouse College, the so-called black Harvard, and later went to New York University when he decided to pursue filmmaking. His Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop; We Cut Heads won a student Academy Award and became the first student film ever shown at Lincoln Center's "New Directors, New Films" series

Despite that success, he was unable to land serious film work. Since Hollywood wasn't helping him, Lee decided to help himself. Armed with spit, prayers and a budget of $175,000, he made She's Gotta Have It, a dizzying, up-to-the-minute look at a relationship through the eyes of an independent and charismatic young black woman and her three suitors. Lee himself played one of those suitors—Mars Blackmon, the fly-mouthed messenger who does everything, including make love, in a pair of Air Jordans that seem to be as large as he is. (Mars lives on in Lee's Nike commercials.) The movie made $8 million and turned Lee into an overnight sensation.

"Black people can't be racist. Black people don't have the power to keep people from getting jobs or the vote."

Had Spike's first film been a fluke? Was it a lucky break or was he really a filmmaker?

Lee answered that with School Daze, an ambitious, multilayered tale about life at a black college. Not only did he attempt to examine such sensitive issues as the stratification of light- and dark-skinned blacks and the cliquish assimilation into the middle class that takes place at black colleges, he did it as a musical comedy. School Daze was one of Columbia Pictures's biggest-grossing films of 1988.

It was in 1989 that Lee tackled his most heated subject: race relations on the hottest day of the year on a tense Bedford-Stuyvesant block in Do the Right Thing. From the flamboyant opening to the tragic climax that ends in one character's death at the hands of the police to the double-barreled closing quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, Do the Right Thing was proudly combative. When it failed to earn a chance at an Oscar for Best Picture, Lee was publicly outraged, claiming the snub was racially motivated. Lee changed pace with Mo' Better Blues, a movie about a single-minded jazz musician, but he continued to be a controversy magnet—he was branded as anti-Semitic because of the movie's portrayal of two avaricious, small-minded Jewish club owners. Since his newest movie, Jungle Fever, a story about interracial love, promises to be one of his most controversial, we decided the time was right to send Elvis Mitchell, a freelancer and National Public Radio's Weekend Edition entertainment critic, to check in with Lee. Mitchell reports:

"Lee has made my life miserable for the past couple of months. The line 'Elvis was a hero to most, but he never meant shit to me' comes from 'Fight the Power,' the bracing and hard-charging theme of Do the Right Thing, and invariably, in phone-tag intramurals preceding our meetings, every message Lee left on my answering machine began with those deathless words, followed by his trademark cackle

"I first met with him in his office in Fort Greene, where he was putting together an assemblage of Jungle Fever to show the studio before leaping into his next picture, an epic on the life and times of Malcolm X. The place is cluttered with boxes and people and Lee was extremely busy. We did manage to talk briefly and schedule our first session, which was to take place on a flight from New York to Los Angeles. He was good-humored and prickly; he loves to catch people off guard and make incendiary comments. For instance, he demanded the right to approve this interview before it was published, but when I told him no, he simply cackled.

"Our first lengthy session, squeezed in between drops during a bumpy flight and a showing of Dick Tracy, demonstrated that Lee was a man of many moods. He preferred judging questions to answering them and seemed more combative than comfortable. But our second session, which took place at his New York apartment a few blocks from his office, was far more relaxed and productive. He responded to the questions with candor and enthusiasm and even posed some of his own. He asserted his shyness and spoke about his difficulty with interviews, even as he talked at length.

"We started with the obvious question."

PLAYBOY: You like to cause trouble, don't you?

LEE: Sure I was an instigator as a kid. I just like to make people think, stir 'em up. What's wrong with that?

PLAYBOY: Jungle Fever certainly seems likely to stir things up.

LEE: [*Laughs*] You think that one's gonna cause some trouble?

PLAYBOY: When you write lines such as "You never see black men with fine white women"? What was the word in the script mugly? Wasn't that the way you described the white women black men go out with?

LEE: [*Laughs*] But that's true. I've never seen black men with fine white women. They be ugly Mugly, dogs. And you always see white men with good-looking black women. But, hey, every time you see an interracial couple somewhere, people stare at 'em.

PLAYBOY: Come on, Spike. That's a big generalization. We've seen good-looking interracial couples.

LEE: I said what I meant to. Never see it.

PLAYBOY: We know you've said in the past that you won't get involved with white women.

LEE: I don't need the trouble. Like I don't have enough as it is. Black women don't go for that, don't like that shit. I just don't find white women attractive, that's all. And it's way too many fine black women out there.

PLAYBOY: Isn't there an interracial marriage in your family?

LEE: Yes. My father. My father remarried. He married a white woman.

PLAYBOY: Did that have any effect on your making Jungle Fever?

LEE: Why? Why would it? I didn't talk to my father about it. I talk to my father only when it comes to scoring my movies. This isn't about him.

PLAYBOY: There's another potential controversy in Jungle Fever. In the opening, you address the audience directly, not as a character, and tell them that if they think you're a racist, they can kiss your "black ass." You say it twice. Why?

LEE: I felt it was justified. I wanted to hit all that, about race, before anybody else.
PLAYBOY: How did test audiences respond to it?
LEE: The test audiences liked it. I don't think Universal is crazy about that shit.
PLAYBOY: Will it stay in the movie?
LEE: I guess it will. I do have final cut.
PLAYBOY: Why does so much of Jungle Fever emphasize racial anger?
LEE: Why shouldn't it? It's out there.
PLAYBOY: You've said that black people are incapable of racism. Do you really believe that?
LEE: Yeah, I do. Let me clear that up, 'cause people are always taking stuff out of context. Black people can't be racist. Racism is an institution. Black people don't have the power to keep hundreds of people from getting jobs or the vote. Black people didn't bring nobody else over in boats. They had to add shit to the Constitution so we could get the vote. Affirmative action is about finished in this country now. It's through. And black people had nothing to do with that, those kinds of decisions. So how can black people be racist when that's the standard? Now, black people can be prejudiced. Shit, everybody's prejudiced about something. I don't think there will ever be an end to prejudice But racism, that's a different thing entirely.
PLAYBOY: You've been quoted as saying that no white man could properly do the Malcolm X story, which you're preparing to direct
LEE: That's right.
PLAYBOY: You don't think Norman Jewison, who was originally scheduled to direct, could pull it off?
LEE: No, I don't. Why do people pull that shit with black people? Don't you think Francis Coppola brought something special to The Godfather because he was an Italian? Don't you think that Martin Scorsese brought something special to GoodFellas because he was Italian?
PLAYBOY: Marlon Brando's not Italian and he was in The Godfather. Isn't the point that there simply aren't enough minorities to be considered?
LEE: Yeah. Now, when that shit changes, then we can talk. Until there are enough black directors, minorities working in movies so it's not an issue, we have to address it different.
PLAYBOY: But what about one director having skills another director doesn't?
LEE: I like Norman Jewison's movies. I respect what he does. I saw In the Heat of the Night, A Soldier's Story. I respect his work. But I think a black man is more qualified, especially in this case. Now, I do think black people are qualified to direct movies about white people.
PLAYBOY: How does that work?
LEE: Because we grow up with white images all the time, in TV, in movies, in books. It's everywhere; you can't get around it. The white world surrounds us. What do white people see of black people? Look at the shit they have us do in movies: "Right on, jive turkey!" [*Laughs*]
PLAYBOY: There's a line in Jungle Fever that says a black man won't rise past a certain level in white corporate America.
LEE: It's true. How many black men do you see running Xerox? How many black men you see running IBM? Shit, we need to be black entrepreneurs, run our own shit. That's what it's about
PLAYBOY: Is that what's behind your store, Spike's Joint?
LEE: It started off as this mom-and-pop operation. We sold T-shirts for the movies and stuff, but we just had too much stuff going on. So, yeah, I wanted to get it going the way I wanted. I want to control the business, and it's easier to do it from the store. Black people just have to understand we need to become owners. Ownership is important. I don't mean to get down on Eddie Murphy, but he only owns 50 percent of Eddie Murphy Productions. His two white managers each own 25 percent of Eddie Murphy Productions. He don't even own 100 percent of himself.
PLAYBOY: You have some other complaints about Murphy, don't you?
LEE: My problem with Eddie has to do with the hiring of black people. He will maintain he can't do nothin' about getting black people hired at Paramount. That's bullshit. A man who makes them a billion dollars can't do nothing about getting black people hired at Paramount? I can't believe that. In my contract, I demand a black man does the design and artwork for my poster Eddie built Paramount. He built their house, he can bring some people in there if he wants to.
PLAYBOY: Overall, you seem to have become less critical about other black performers. Have you mellowed?
LEE: Look, I was never that critical. When I said that shit about Whoopi Goldberg, I was talking about the contact lenses, she was wearing blue contact lenses. She don't wear them blue contact lenses no more, do she?
PLAYBOY: What's the deal between you and Arsenio Hall?
LEE: [*Smiles*] Deal? What deal? I been on his show twice. You have to be specific.
PLAYBOY: Wasn't there a quarrel between the two of you?
LEE: I criticized him once. I never criticized him as a talk-show host
PLAYBOY: Our understanding is that you appeared on his show last summer and were supposed to go back about a month later and were disinvited
LEE: Yeah. They canceled on me at the last minute. Didn't even hear from him. Some assistant said they didn't want me on the show. It's in the past. Nothing to say about it. It's all been worked out. I was on his show for Mo' Better
PLAYBOY: Jungle Fever and Do the Right Thing both deal with the relationships between blacks and Italians in the outer boroughs of New York. Why did you choose to deal with that twice?
LEE: Well, history has proven that in New York City, those are the two most violent, volatile combinations of ethnic groups. Black people and Jewish people have static, but it rarely ever elevates to a physical thing. Little Italy, Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge, Canarsie—black people know that these are neighborhoods that you don't fuck around in.
PLAYBOY: What do you remember as a kid about that kind of thing that feeling of fear you talk about?
LEE: Well, I grew up in sort of an Italian neighborhood. I lived in Cobble Hill before I moved here to Fort Greene. A lot of Italian people there. And we were really the first black family to move into Cobble Hill. For the first couple of days, we got called "nigger," but we were basically left alone. We weren't perceived as a threat, because there was only one of us. In fact, some of my best friends who lived down the block were the Tuccis. Louis Tucci, Joe Tucci, Annabella's [*Sciorra]* family [*in Jungle Fever*], they're the Tuccis
PLAYBOY: While growing up in that kind of neighborhood, what was your feeling about Italians?
LEE: I think Cobble Hill is a lot different than Bensonhurst. You had a lot of Jewish people in Cobble Hill, too, so it just seemed to be more—I don't want to use the word intelligent, but
PLAYBOY: Tolerant?
LEE: Yeah, that would be a good word.
PLAYBOY: It just seems odd that the kind of neighborhood you depict in your pictures is so different from the kind you grew up in. Did you ever have an encounter in one of those places like Bensonhurst?
LEE: No. See, I went to John Dewey High School on Coney Island. But some of my friends went to other high schools, like F.D R., Fort Hamilton,

"Eddie Murphy will maintain he can't do nothin' about getting black people hired at Paramount. That's bullshit."

X

schools like that. They used to chase the black kids from the school to the subway station. A lot of my friends got chased.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever go to Bensonhurst just to see what it's like over there?

LEE: A couple of days after Yusef Hawkins got murdered, this reporter from Newsday invited me to walk around Bensonhurst with him. Other than that, I never went to it until we shot Jungle Fever over there

PLAYBOY: What was that walk like?

LEE: Well, I was a celebrity, so it was "Spike, sign an autograph." "Spike, you bringing Michael Jordan around here?" "Spike, you bringing Flavor Flav?" It was exactly like the scene in Do the Right Thing between me and Pino over the cigarette machine, with an allowance. Pino says Magic Johnson, Eddie Murphy and Prince aren't black, they're more than black. That's the way I thought I was being viewed. I was "Spike Lee," I wasn't a black person, so they asked me for my autograph. If I was anybody else, I could have gotten a bat over the head.

PLAYBOY: How does it make you feel to be a celebrity in the neighborhood where you more or less grew up?

LEE: Well, I think that people don't necessarily look at me as a celebrity, because they know I grew up here. It's no big thing; they see me every day, buying the paper or walking to work and stuff like that. People say hello, but it's not like [*a throaty scream*] "Spike Lee!" It's not no Beatles shit or anything like that.

PLAYBOY: What do people on the street say? Do they tell you what they like or dislike about your movies?

LEE: They come up and tell me how much they like Mars Blackmon, or they tell me what they think I should do for my next movie. I'm always getting these comments from people who know exactly what my next movie should be. It's funny—I guess everybody's a director. Or a critic

PLAYBOY: When you were a kid, did you know you wanted to make movies?

LEE: I didn't grow up thinking I wanted to make movies, be a director. Everybody in my neighborhood saw a lot of movies. There was nothing special about going to the movies. I didn't know what I wanted to do. At Morehouse College, I had a combined major of communications: radio-television, journalism, film—not film right away.

PLAYBOY: Do you remember the first film you saw that made you want to make movies?

LEE: Wait a minute. I never had a moment like that. It was never, "I saw Lawrence of Arabia when I was two and suddenly I was hit by the magic power of film." That's bullshit. Like I told you, I just went to the movies. Nobody thought about being a director, not me or anybody else. I read that all the time "After I saw that picture, I knew there was nothing else for me to do" that's a lie. It's just bullshit when people say that.

PLAYBOY: Maybe it's a lie sometimes, but certainly, some directors see movies as kids and want to make films

LEE: I think it's bullshit. It's just something almost every director says. I have never believed it. I tell you this: It wasn't that way for me. "That's what makes movies seem like this magical thing" or somethin'. That's just Hollywood bullshit, people saying that shit because it makes makin' movies special, and the people who make movies special. The first time I went on a movie set, it didn't look like nothin' magical to me. [Laughs] It was the exact same thing I was doing on my student movies, only it was bigger and they were spendin' more money. That's what keeps black people out of movies—the idea that makin' movies is some special thing, some calling or something. That's what I'm about demystifying movies. I want to do away with that bullshit.

PLAYBOY: Do you remember the first Sidney Poitier film you saw?

LEE: It had to be Lilies of the Field. I hated that movie. I must have been six, seven years old, but even at that age, I felt like putting a rock through the screen. Later with these nuns! You better get outa here before one of 'em says that you raped 'em! But we owe a lot to Sidney Poitier, because in order for us to get to where we are today, those films had to be made. And Sidney had to do what he had to do. He was the perfect Negro.

PLAYBOY: What did you think when you saw Guess Who's Coming to Dinner especially now that you're doing a movie about interracial romance?

LEE: It was white liberal b.s. You have to look at it in the context of when this film came out. This film came out in the 1960s, during the whole civil rights movement. At that time, it was a great advance for black people in the cinema

PLAYBOY: That aside, what were you thinking as you were sitting there watching it? Were you bored? Angry?

LEE: I wasn't angry. It was just that the only way they would accept this guy was because he was a perfect human being: a doctor, from Harvard or whatever it was. Making a long-distance call and leaving the money out. That's the only way the audience would accept him, because he was such a fine, upstanding citizen.

Sidney had a great burden. He was carrying the whole weight of the hopes and aspirations of the African Americans on his shoulders. I think that had a lot to do with the roles that he chose. I think he felt he could not do a "negative" character. That's something I have tried to do, not get into that whole positive-negative image thing.

PLAYBOY: You must hear that sometimes

LEE: Sometimes? All the time. Black folks tell me all the time that my image is not a positive portrayal of black people.

PLAYBOY: Did that start with She's Gotta Have It?

LEE: She's Gotta Have It has Nola Darling. She's a negative portrayal of black women and just reinforces what white people think about black women being loose, anyway. And School Daze—again, it was negative images of black people, showing fighting all the time. I was airing dirty laundry with our differences, which I feel are petty and superficial.

Do the Right Thing, I've got more negative images. None of the black people in Do the Right Thing have a job It shows we're all lazy or whatever. It shows Sweet Dick Willie pissing against the wall, and that's a negative image of black people.

PLAYBOY: But obviously, you understand the complaints.

LEE: I understand what that means, positive black role models, because of the way black people have been shown in movies and on TV But it's unrealistic to make every character I come up with a doctor or a lawyer or something that's just a flat character. Like, in Jungle Fever, I bring in drugs because it's time. One of the characters is a basehead, because it's appropriate.

PLAYBOY: What about a movie such as School Daze, in which you're showing the environment at a black college? Did that get a negative reaction?

LEE: Yeah. The schools themselves were saying it would be a negative portrayal of black higher education. That's one of the reasons why, three weeks into shooting, we got kicked off Morehouse's campus. Spelman refused to let us shoot there at all.

PLAYBOY: In School Daze, you showed a part of the black culture—the black middle class—that's not usually shown. Didn't they want that to be shown?

LEE: Yeah, but a lot of the administration and faculty in these schools, these are old schools. To me, they're very backward.

PLAYBOY: Did many of your fellow students rebel at middle-class traditions at Morehouse?

LEE: Yeah. We never got a really big thing, but there were students who were not going along with the program. They didn't want to be that "Morehouse Man."

PLAYBOY: How many films did you shoot when you were in school?

LEE: At Morehouse? I might have done one or two. It was there that I had my appetite whet. That's where I became interested in film and that's where I decided I wanted to become a filmmaker. That's why I went to NYU. At NYU, I started making films.

PLAYBOY: It took you three years to get any work after you graduated from NYU. Did that bother you?

LEE: I have no bitterness. The way it happens is the way it should happen. We had to struggle for three years, but I was a better filmmaker. I don't think

I could have made She's Gotta Have It straight out of film school.

PLAYBOY: What did it take for you to be ready to make it?

LEE: More maturity. And to be hungrier.

PLAYBOY: Where did the money come from?

LEE: Everywhere. Even though the budget for the film was a $175,000, we never had that money all at one time. When we began the shoot that July, we only had $13,000 in the bank.

Man, that movie was so hard to make. We were cashin' in bottles for change, because we had so little money. I remember, we were shootin' in Nola's loft in the middle of the summer it musta been 104 degrees up there. When it's so hot, people drink a lot and I remember sayin', "Don't throw away the bottles." That's the one of my movies I can't watch again, She's Gotta Have It.

PLAYBOY: Was it so painful to make?

LEE: Yeah, it was hard. We only shot for 12 days, but every night, after we finished the day's work, I had to think about tryin' to go out and raise money for the very next day. Things have changed so much now, you know. We have money for contingencies, reshoots or whatever. Each picture is a little easier. But also, with She's Gotta Have It, the acting was bad.

PLAYBOY: You don't like the performances?

LEE: No, not at all. They just weren't very good. I didn't really know how to direct. I wasn't good with the actors, in telling 'em what I wanted from 'em. I was just out of film school, and that was my only experience. In film school, you don't really get to work with actors, you never really have much contact with the actors, and so you're kinda intimidated by 'em. You don't deal with 'em much at all.

PLAYBOY: What was your personal life like at the time?

LEE: Everything was wrapped up in getting this film made. We invited the American independent distributors to come to the San Francisco Film Festival, because that's where the world premiere was going to happen. In the middle of the film, there was a blackout in San Francisco. Not the whole city but that particular neighborhood. So for half an hour the theater was packed, too—people just sat there. I was sitting there in a chair in the dark, on the stage. There was a question-and-answer period while we waited for the lights to come back on. So I answered questions in the dark, and nobody left.

PLAYBOY: Did you start laughing at that point? You'd been through so much.

LEE: No. I said it was an act of God. What is happening? At the beginning of the movie, a blackout. But that's where the bidding war started. We sold it to Island Pictures for $475,000 and went on to make $8 million.

PLAYBOY: How long before you made your next picture?

LEE: That has been the biggest gap of all my films, between She's Gotta Have It and School Daze. I had to stay with that film a long time. Promote it, get it out there It came out in '86, and School Daze didn't come out until '88. But since then, we've made a film every year.

PLAYBOY: School Daze sounds like it was overly ambitious, going from a four-character piece essentially in one room to a big musical with lots of production numbers and lots of characters.

LEE: I didn't think that was overly ambitious. I know that has been reflected in some people's reviews of the film. What I wanted to do in School Daze was, in that two-hour movie, was compress my four years of Morehouse

PLAYBOY: Were you surprised by the response that your next film, Do the Right Thing, got at the Cannes Film Festival?

LEE: That was a big response. You don't know. Sometimes, what might play in the States might not go in Europe, and vice versa. But I knew they would like She's Gotta Have It. It had a very European feel to it, the way it was cut and shot and that kind of stuff

> "Black folks tell me all the time that my image is not a positive portrayal of black people."

PLAYBOY: What about what German director Wim Wenders said?

LEE: Oh, yeah, he said that Do the Right Thing was "not heroic"? Yeah, very. I was disappointed. I hold no grudges against Wim Wenders now. I never had anything against Steven Soderbergh [who won the Golden Palm that year], because it was not his doing. He made a very good film with sex, lies, and videotape. It was not his fault that he got the award. I know he's happy he got it, but I had no ill feelings toward Steven, and we're still friends today. [Sex, lies, and videotape] was very, very heroic. Especially this James Spader character, this guy jerking off all the time to the TV. Taping sexual confessions of women. Very heroic.

PLAYBOY: You said that Mo' Better Blues, your fourth film, was consciously noncontroversial. Not only are you dealing with interracial romance in Jungle Fever, but you're also dealing with drugs. Why add two controversial elements?

LEE: I don't know. I might have given it the interracial thing, but how is drugs controversial?

PLAYBOY: Because you purposefully avoided, you said, drugs as a subplot previously in Do the Right Thing.

LEE: Yeah, but I don't think the word is controversy. I'm not gonna let any critic determine my agenda. I find it preposterous that critics would attack me for not having drugs in Do the Right Thing, as if drugs were the complete domain of black people. How could you do a film set in Bed-Stuy without any drugs? Easy. We black people aren't the only people on drugs. The reason you've got drugs on the so-called agenda is because you've got young white kids in middle-class America and white suburbia who are doing crack and whatever. Then it becomes a national problem. As long as it was contained within the black ghettos, you would never see that problem being dealt with on the covers of Time or Newsweek. And if that is the case, which it is, then why have I never read of any white filmmakers being chastised for not having drugs in their films?

PLAYBOY: Obviously, the critics thought the criticism was valid because of that particular neighborhood

LEE: Hey, there's as much drugs in Bed-Stuy as there is on Wall Street or the Upper East Side.

PLAYBOY: How did you get hooked up with the Fruit of Islam? Some people criticize that group's militancy and its association with Louis Farrakhan.

LEE: When we did location scouting for Do the Right Thing, we needed a block in Bed-Stuy that had two empty lots on the corner that faced each other. We had to build a pizzeria, and build a Korean fruit and vegetable stand. It turned out there were two or three crack houses on the block, or in the vicinity, so knowing the Fruit they don't play that we brought them in. They closed down the crack houses and they stayed on for security for the rest of the film.

PLAYBOY: It seems ironic that the movie doesn't deal with drugs and you had to run the crack dealers off the block.

LEE: I don't find it ironic. Drugs is a part of our society, but I felt they should not be a part of this story. This film was really about 24 hours in the life of this block on the hottest day of the summer. It was really about race relations. I didn't want to put drugs in this.

PLAYBOY: You seem very sure of yourself, and yet you've consistently portrayed the characters you play in your films as powerless and ineffectual.

LEE: Yeah, well, I don't see the need to make myself the hero in my movies. What's the point in that?

PLAYBOY: Why do you keep playing the same kind of character?

LEE: I'm not that impressed with myself as an actor. I don't think much of myself that way. I don't have a whole lot of range as far as acting. Mars Blackmon, that was all right. I didn't expect people to like him, the way

they did.

PLAYBOY: What makes you continue to act in your pictures?

LEE: It really has to do with box office, with having somewhat of a little appeal with the audience. People will be more apt to come to one of my films if I'm in it.

PLAYBOY: Will you be in Malcolm X?

LEE: Probably. [*Laughs*] I still need to be in my films

PLAYBOY: Mo' Better Blues was criticized for its portrayal of Jews There's even a story about your father having gone down to apologize to the owner of a Village jazz club because of your portrayal of Jews in that film

LEE: Huh? I can't respond to that, because I never heard it before. Look, Siskel and Ebert I shouldn't say this, 'cause they're fans of mine. Soon as Mo' Better Blues comes out, they [start talking about] stereotypes. Then came [New York Times critic] Caryn James with her stupid-ass article Nobody was supposed to take those guys as representin' all Jews. Besides, where was everybody when that what's-his-name movie with Steven Seagal came out?

PLAYBOY: Marked for Death?

LEE: What about that racist piece of shit? That's a number-one hit for a couple of weeks, and where was everybody when that came out? They had nothin' to say about it.

PLAYBOY: What did you think when you saw it?

LEE: I didn't see it.

PLAYBOY: One of the best things in your films tends to be their improvisational quality, the way you handle the interplay between people.

LEE: Yeah, it helps to have actors who know how to improvise. Not everybody's good at it.

PLAYBOY: Like who?

LEE: I don't wanna say

PLAYBOY: Wait a second. You're worried about hurting somebody's feelings? When the Oscars came around in 1990, you didn't seem so worried about hurting people's feelings

LEE: That didn't have nothin' to do with hurting people's feelings. It was that Fred Schelp Sheep— What's that guy's name? That Australian guy?

PLAYBOY: Fred Schepisi? What about him?

LEE: You know, the one who did Driving Miss Daisy?

PLAYBOY: You mean Bruce Beresford

LEE: Him. Yeah, him. Bruce Beresford. When he was complaining about not getting a nomination for Best Director, nobody made anything of that. Or when [*Richard*] Zanuck, he started complaining, you know, about Driving Miss Daisy, how could it get a Best Picture nomination and not get a Best Director nomination? It was as soon as I started sayin' we got robbed on Do the Right Thing, suddenly, I'm the one. I'm the problem.

PLAYBOY: People think you're an artist, and they have higher expectations of you. When you complain about being shut out, people are let down by it.

LEE: I don't buy that. I don't believe that. I was complaining about the Oscars because we should've got a Best Picture nomination

PLAYBOY: A lot of movies that stand the test of time never get nominated for Oscars or they never win Oscars

LEE: Oscars, they can mean money. You know, you get a Best Picture nomination and the studios, they can promote a picture, advertise. They can get more people to come out and see it. People were afraid to come see Do the Right Thing as it was, afraid there would be riots and shit.

PLAYBOY: Some people claim that you use racism as a tool to strike out at others, such as in your attack of New York Times critic Janet Maslin's review of School Daze, when you said, "I bet she can't even dance. Does she have rhythm?"

LEE: She didn't get the point of School Daze, and the way she dissed it, talking about "my little musical." Race is an issue, and I don't always use it. You'd think I don't like critics. I don't like The New York Times. Well, I read Vincent Canby.

PLAYBOY: You've always had a dicey relationship with the press. Stanley Crouch, in his essay "Do the Race Thing," discusses how you tried to have it both ways with Do the Right Thing, by quoting Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

LEE: That ignorant motherfucker. He has no idea what he's talking about. Shit, what about all those motherfuckers like Joe Klein at New York sayin' Do the Right Thing would cause a riot, because it was released during the summer? Or David Denby callin' it irresponsible? That's irresponsible. And it's lazy. When the riots didn't happen, when Dinkins got elected, neither one of them, none of the people who said that shit, said they were wrong in print or apologized.

PLAYBOY: What about the Nike Air Jordan controversy? New York Post columnist Phil Mushnick wrote that you and Michael Jordan glamourize expensive shoes and sometimes kids are killed in robberies over them

LEE: Shit. What about it? It's my fault, it's Michael Jordan's fault, that kids are buying those shoes? That's just the trigger. There's more to it than that. Something is wrong where these young black kids have to put so much weight, where their whole life is tied up—their life is so hopeless—that their life is defined by a pair of sneakers. Or a sheepskin coat. The problem is not the coat or the sneakers. I mean, we tried to explore that with Do the Right Thing with the radio. These young black kids who are lost. Radio Raheem [the character who's killed by the police]—his life was that radio. That really defined his existence. I mean, without that radio, he's invisible; people don't notice him. But with that radio blasting Public Enemy and "Fight the Power," you had to deal with him. It made people notice him. It gave him self-worth. And when Sal killed his radio, he might as well have killed his mother or his father or himself. That's why he tried to choke the shit out of Sal.

PLAYBOY: What about that Sports Illustrated article where Jordan was almost reduced to tears? He's publicly remorseful, disturbed by what his endorsement may have caused

LEE: What the fuck? You think I'm happy black men are dying over shoes? Hell, no! Hell, no! I'm upset about it too. Is every black man who wears those shoes a drug dealer? Hell, no! You know how that is. Look at you. You're wearing Pumps. Are you a drug dealer? Hell, no! They're oversimplifying the issue.

PLAYBOY: Okay, let's ask an easy question: What is Michael Jordan really like?

LEE: Mike's a down brother. Mike just had a lot of confidence in me. He was a young brother. He liked She's Gotta Have It. He felt like I did, that it was important that we hook up. Mike pulled me to the side and said, "Look, there's been some grumbling where Nike is trying to ease you out. But as long as I'm around, you're around." I said, "I hear you, Mike. Thank you for getting me back." That's why I did those commercials. I thought it was important that me and Mike do something together. Young black people in different fields, hooking up.

PLAYBOY: Did your parents encourage you to go into the arts?

LEE: Not really. Whatever you wanted to do was fine with them. They encouraged us, but they never pushed me in any direction. I will say that we had great exposure to the arts at a young age. We had to. My mother taught art; she liked the theater and liked music. My father is a jazz musician—he played with folk singers, too, like Theodore Bikel and Josh White—so mu-

"People were afraid to come see 'Do the Right Thing,' afraid there would be riots and shit."

sic was always being played in the house. I remember my mother dragging me to The King and I with Yul Brynner when I was little. I started crying; I was scared to death. She had to take me home.

PLAYBOY: What was the first thing you remember sitting through and really enjoying as a kid, even if it didn't make you want to be a filmmaker?

LEE: When I was real little, I saw Hatari. Remember that? John Wayne in a safari film, with the rhinoceros. And Bye Bye Birdie. My mother would take me to see James Bond films, Goldfinger and Dr. No. I remember her taking me to see A Hard Day's Night.

PLAYBOY: Did you like that?

LEE: Yeah. I liked the Beatles when I was little. My father would turn down the radio when he came in the house.

PLAYBOY: He didn't like the Beatles?

LEE: He didn't like no music besides jazz. [*Shouts*] "Turn that bad music off!"

PLAYBOY: Did you always know you were going to college?

LEE: Yeah. I mean, what else was I gonna do? My father and my grandfather, they went to college, so it was there for me too. What else would I do, work at a McDonald's? Go work for somebody else? I never thought about rebellin', not goin' to college It was what I was gonna do

PLAYBOY: You sound like you were a practical kid, not a troublemaker.

LEE: I grew up as the oldest, so I had to be practical. The oldest child has to take care of the younger kids. They're always the most practical.

PLAYBOY: What was your relationship with the kids in the neighborhood?

LEE: I was always a leader. I was the one organizing stuff.

PLAYBOY: Did you like school as a kid?

LEE: Not really.

PLAYBOY: Did you do well?

LEE: Just good enough to get by.

PLAYBOY: Which must not have made your mother too happy, since she was a teacher.

LEE: She was always on me. I'd get an 80 and I'd be happy, but she'd be like, "Well, you shouldn't be content with an 80. Them Jewish kids are getting 95." [*Laughs*] But she was right.

PLAYBOY: Do you wonder what it would be like if you were growing up now?

LEE: It would be frightening, with the violence and the access to weapons and guns, and the drugs. Before, we used to be terrified if we even saw somebody taking a puff on a joint. But now, if you're a parent, you pray to God that's all your child is doing is smoking marijuana.

PLAYBOY: Do you think there's a lack of emphasis on education now?

LEE: Right. Half of the young black males here in New York City don't even finish high school. But this is not to say that I'm blaming them. I'm not trying to point a finger at the victim. I think that the educational system has failed. At the same time, I've never been one just to blame white people for everything, for all of our ills. We have to take some responsibility. If stuff's going to be corrected, it's up to us. It's up to the parents. What are these kids doing outside late at night? Eight years old and hanging out later than I am. Running in the streets at two, three, four in the morning. Where are their parents?

When we were growing up, people looked out after each other. Other parents could tell you something. If somebody else's mother saw you doing something wrong, that mother would treat you as if you were her child.

PLAYBOY: But you also got straightened out in school, right?

LEE: Yeah. I think that discipline, that's what's really lacking. I'm not saying let's go back to the Dark Ages when they were hitting kids in school with rulers, but discipline is really lacking.

PLAYBOY: Does it make you leery of having a family?

LEE: No, not really at all. When I do have a family, I don't want to send them to private school, because I feel that's too sheltered.

PLAYBOY: Even given the problems with the educational system?

LEE: I will be able to get my kids in the best public schools here. I mean, there are good public schools here, but there aren't that many. I went to public school, my brother Chris went to public school. But David, Joie and Cinque went to private school. I always could tell a difference in them because they went to private school. Their negritude got honed or harnessed going into these predominantly white private schools. That's where my mother was teaching.

PLAYBOY: Do you talk about this?

LEE: They know it. Most of their friends were white. Not that I have anything against that, it's just that there is definitely an argument for being around your own people

PLAYBOY: A lot of the parents who send their kids to private schools today went to public schools themselves. They fear their children won't get a good education or be safe at a public school.

LEE: They're justified in thinking that. People are getting shot and stabbed in school. That's not supposed to happen in a school.

PLAYBOY: Did your mother try to keep you away from the bad kids in the neighborhood?

LEE: No. There were never any gangs. I don't remember ever seeing any. There were people who would steal your lunch money, but that wasn't no gang thing. I mean, now they'll shoot you. When I was growing up, they might take a quarter from you. You give it up.

PLAYBOY: Or fight.

LEE: Yeah, but it's not like "Give us your leather coat or I'll shoot you."

PLAYBOY: Since the educational system is so bad, why should kids be unemployed college grads when they could sell crack and make a lot of money?

LEE: That is something that is going to have to be dealt with, the economics. Forget about the moral issue, even though it should play into it. It's not going to weigh when these kids are faced with the fact of making minimum wage at McDonald's or making three and four thousand a week selling crack. Not everybody, but a lot of them are going to sell that crack and make that money. You're not thinking about how you might end up dead, eventually, or end up in jail. That's not the point. Now you can buy that BMW or whatever. Gold chains and gold teeth. Kangols and Kazals.

PLAYBOY: Where do you think that materialism comes from?

LEE: Well, when people don't have anything, they have to try and show they do have something. And you show that by what you wear or the car you drive. "I'm not like all the rest of these poor niggers. I got something."

PLAYBOY: Don't some black kids view education itself as white?

LEE: There's something very sick where if you speak well and you speak articulately, that's looked at as being negative and speaking white. I remember when I was growing up, people used to tell me, "You sound white." I've been reading of various cases where kids flunk on purpose so they'll be considered "down" with the home boys and stuff. That's crazy when intelligence is thought of as being white and all the other stuff is being black and being down. I think that one has to be able to navigate both worlds. You ought to be able to speak with your brothers on the street but at the same time be able to go to a job interview, fill out the application and speak proper English. You've got to have both. I don't think it makes you any less black by being articulate.

PLAYBOY: Where do you think that attitude comes from?

LEE: I think all this stuff you could really trace to our hatred of ourselves. Everything we do, eventually, if you keep going back far enough, you'll see that we've been taught to hate ourselves. And until we stop that, all this other shit we're doing is just going to continue to happen.

PLAYBOY: Comedian Franklyn Ajaye said that one of the things he didn't like about In Living Color when he was a writer there was that everybody talked like they were down. He didn't see any kind of reflection of articulate black life in the show, and that bothered him.

LEE: Me and Keenen [Ivory Wayans] talked about it. He was on the cover of New York magazine, and in the article, they said they had 13 writers and only three or four were black. The rest were all these Jewish kids that went to Harvard. So I just asked Keenen what's up. He explained to me all he's done for black people, as far as the show is concerned. I'm not going to dispute that. I'm not saying it's because they did the skit on me, but if you have some white kid from Harvard joking about Malcolm X Lax I don't

think that shit is funny. I don't think they'd allow a black person to make a joke about Golda Meir

PLAYBOY: Do you think being educated means that you're not black?

LEE: In a perverse kind of way. Everything has been kind of turned upside down. I think we've just got a lot of things turned around.

PLAYBOY: When did that happen?

LEE: A lot of things happened after the civil rights movement, where we thought we were making strides and progress. Somewhere from the end of the Sixties up to now, we got off the path. Or we were led off the path. I think that we really haven't advanced a lot. For me, the biggest problem is that people get tricked. Because of the visibility of a couple of African Americans who are able to split through, mostly in entertainment or the sports industry, it gives off the perception that black people have made great strides and that everything is all right. But the reality is, we're not all right. You look at all the black people who are dying of cancer, hypertension, AIDS. The permanently unemployed. The black underclass now is larger than it's ever been. But people are tricked into not really taking that stuff into account. I'm not blaming these people. They're tricked because they see Oprah Winfrey, they see Bill Cosby, they see Spike Lee, they see Eddie Murphy, they see Michael Jordan, they see Bo Jackson, Paula Abdul, M.C. Hammer, Janet Jackson, Arsenio Hall. But we're just a couple of people. We were the exception, not the rule. We were able to slide through that microscopic crack that was open for a second

PLAYBOY: Is it because you think there are so many visible black people that

LEE: Wait. If you look at the context of all the shows that are on TV and all the movies that are made, and then look at the percent, it's not that many. It's just the perception that there's a lot of us.

PLAYBOY: Based on that perception and the fact that you can say there may be more successful, visible black people than ever, the perception is that

LEE: We've arrived. And that's not the case at all. I mean, there's not one person outside of Eddie Murphy, really, not one African American in Hollywood who can green-light a picture. Who can say, "I want this picture made," and that's it.

PLAYBOY: You can't get that done?

LEE: No matter what? For me to get a film made, I have to present a script, and they either do it or they don't. But every studio has people who are the guardians of the gate. They're the ones who say this picture gets made and this picture doesn't. And there are no black people in that position in Hollywood. I mean, we're getting ready to have a big fight with the Teamsters here in New York because they don't have no black people. We used the Teamsters on Do the Right Thing, Mo' Better and Jungle Fever, and the amount that we paid for the Teamsters for all three films is like three quarters of a million dollars. And there are only three or four black Teamsters in the whole union, here in New York. I refuse to give money to organizations that are openly into hiring practices that may exclude blacks. So we're about to go toe to toe with them on Malcolm X.

PLAYBOY: You're not going to use them?

LEE: If they don't get some more black people in it, they can kiss our ass. We told them that. They even refused to sit down with us and meet. They said, "We will let no one dictate to us who to hire."

PLAYBOY: So they deny any discriminatory practices?

LEE: The Teamsters, man, it's predominantly Irish. This particular branch I'm talking about here in New York. The Teamsters who work on movies.

PLAYBOY: How long have you been talking to them about this? Since you started to use them?

LEE: Yeah. They've been appeasing us. They might give us one or two, but we told them we wanted a black Teamster captain and we wanted five black people to get their books. They trick you sometimes. Let me not use the word trick, but they might put black people on your film, but they don't have their books. Meaning they're not full-fledged members of the union and don't receive the full benefits of the union. If you're a Teamster here in New York, they have the best benefits of any union in the country. Any of their children, they can go to college—free. Whatever college you choose. The union will pay for it.

PLAYBOY: And there are just a handful of black people in the union?

LEE: A handful. I mean, they just admitted one who got his book recently. But the last time one got admitted before that was 1962. There's too much money being made. I refuse to give money to an organization like that that's just so overtly racist in their hiring practices.

PLAYBOY: There is obviously now a big trend toward trying to increase the African-American inclusion in the movie mainstream. We've heard that people are already expecting a backlash. Remember when The Wit and Ragtime failed—

LEE: That was it. They said, "Black people don't support these films. Let's stop making black films." The blame was never put on Sidney Lumet, or the score, or the casting of Diana Ross. That is not to disrespect any of them, but the blame was put solely on "black people who failed to support this film." Whereas, if a white film doesn't work, it would be the director or whoever

PLAYBOY: In some ways, there seems to be a renaissance of black participation in popular culture. There's you and Robert Townsend, In Living Color and the enormous effect of rap

LEE: Yeah, that's true. They've finally realized black people contribute, and black audiences are a power in the entertainment market. Studios know there's just too much money to be made now from black audiences. And that people wanna see us, too.

PLAYBOY: Do you worry that history will repeat itself?

LEE: I think that this is a very crucial time. Every film studio, if you're black and even look like you're a director, they're signing you. And it's very important that all these people who are getting opportunities really be serious. I'm not trying to speak like I'm the grandfather of black cinema. But I think that there are a lot of people who are getting deals now and more power to them—but I don't know if they're going to last. They just think that you can just walk off the street and direct a movie—and it is not true. This ain't just no bullshit; "Well, I'm just directing a film. I don't need to know nothing about film grammar or film history," or any other thing that one needs to know to become a film director

PLAYBOY: You talked about being attacked for the Nola Darling character in She's Gotta Have It. Do you think you're becoming more enlightened about your portrayals of women?

LEE: This is something I've known all along. Every filmmaker has a weakness, just like athletes.

PLAYBOY: But we're not talking about every filmmaker

LEE: No, I'm saying every filmmaker, every athlete has weaknesses. If you come into the league hitting 50 percent at the free-throw line, you've got to do something about your foul shooting if you want to be a complete ballplayer. My female characters were something I needed to work on. It was lacking. It's something I've tried to concentrate on.

PLAYBOY: We always thought one of the interesting things about Nola was that she lived her life the way she wanted to.

LEE: Yeah, but that wasn't the only film where they talked about the female characters. School Daze—they weren't as multidimensional as the male characters. There weren't enough of them in Do the Right Thing. And in Mo' Better, all they wanted was the man; they didn't have a life of their own—which I don't agree with for that particular film.

"You think I'm happy black men are dying over shoes? Hell, no! Hell, no! I'm upset about it too."

PLAYBOY: How does this affect your personal relationships? Do women have preconceived notions about you?

LEE: I don't really think you can break that question down to a sex thing, as far as male-female. I think that's just in general. Any time you're out in the public eye, people, when they meet you in person, they expect you to live up to that expectation of what that persona is. A lot of people expect me to be more animated, and they're kind of disappointed. "I didn't know you were quiet." So that really has nothing to do with male-female.

PLAYBOY: What about your relationships with white people? It's clear that a lot of white people are afraid of you.

LEE: I guess you fear stuff you don't understand. I don't think any white folks have anything to fear from me.

PLAYBOY: Still, almost all of the movie industry is white. All they ever see are other white people.

LEE: With a small smattering of Jewish people. [Laughs] I don't know why some Jewish people get upset when you say that there are a lot of Jewish people in the movie industry. That's the truth. That's like saying there are blacks in the N.B.A. That's not making a judgment, that's just a fact.

PLAYBOY: Do they really get sensitive when you say there are lots of Jews in the industry?

LEE: Yeah. The New York Times, there was this whole black-Jewish Hollywood thing. It was sparked by the convention the NAACP had in Hollywood where they said that Hollywood is racist and so on, and that it was run predominantly by Jewish people.

PLAYBOY: You must get a lot of calls whenever something like that happens.

LEE: Hooo, from around the world! The phone rings off the hook at our office. I think that this is what happens when the media appoints their so-called spokesperson for black people. This is something I have never wanted to achieve. It's not something I've chased after. And, for the most part, I don't say anything. But there are instances where stuff has to be spoken on. But, for the most part, I only answer about five percent of their questions.

PLAYBOY: What do you think about the future for African Americans?

LEE: If you look at the eight years of Reagan and maybe another eight of Bush, and the way they're dismantling affirmative action and all that stuff we fought for and died for, or the Supreme Court that's being appointed—Bush tried to pull this thing where it's discriminatory for schools to have scholarships for black students, and then they get this Uncle Tom handkerchief-head Negro to announce it as assistant secretary [of the Education Department]. Nobody even heard of this motherfucker, but the moment that this program has to be implemented and an announcement has to be made, they pull this Negro off the shelf. How are we supposed to go to school? It's a shame that we've still got Uncle Toms like this around. That guy should be beat with a Louisville Slugger in an alley. He got used. That's the only reason why they hired him, for something specific like that that was going to affect black people. So by the Bush Administration having this black person make this announcement, it can't be racist—we got a black person saying it.

PLAYBOY: Do you wonder if there has been some complacency since the civil rights movement?

LEE: I think America just really arrived at the point where it said, Look—and I think the mandate was handed down by Reagan—where it said, Look, we are tired of you niggers. You've got about as much as you're gonna get from us, and that's it. Period.

PLAYBOY: Some black people say they don't want special consideration.

LEE: Special? I don't think it's special, the fact that we were brought here as slaves and we've been robbed of our heritage and everything else. I mean, I don't consider that special.

PLAYBOY: So we take it you don't have much truck with black conservatives.

LEE: They'll sell you out in a minute. They sold us out. I mean, they're trying to make a big deal out of this what's-his-name, Colin Powell.

PLAYBOY: You don't think that he's a formidable figure? He's the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—that shows black progress, doesn't it?

LEE: So what? So we've got a black general that's going to be head of the Army that kills black people in Panama? Kills black people in Nicaragua? People of color in the Middle East? How come every war now is against people of color in Third World countries? They talk about fighting for democracy: Is South Africa democratic? I know it would be too farfetched to ask Bush to send troops into South Africa to fight for black people, so let's not talk about that. But how about sanctions? He's trying to lift the mother-fucking sanctions! Saddam does not compare to what De Klerk and all them crooks down there in South Africa are doing and have been doing. But they're white, so it's not perceived as that.

PLAYBOY: So you think it's another instance of racism?

LEE: Yes. I'm not going to say that Saddam might not be a maniac, but if you just study the way the press portrays Noriega, Ortega, Hussein, the ayatollah and the way they portray people like Botha, De Klerk, Cecil Rhodes—I mean, it's the difference between night and day. I have to give in, they have a point on Hitler and Mussolini, but since World War II, there is a difference in the way they portray dictators

PLAYBOY: But look at the way the Soviets were portrayed.

LEE: That was really during the Cold War. They didn't send no troops into Lithuania and shit. They bogarted that country the same way that Hussein bogarted Kuwait. For me, the United States is not on the moral ground to judge anybody, because it's the most hypocritical country in the world. So, to me, they really can't say shit about nobody, because they got a lot of shit with themselves.

PLAYBOY: Do you think that after the civil rights movement lost its figureheads—Martin Luther King and Malcolm X—it lost momentum?

LEE: It did, but that's a mistake of putting emphasis on personality and people instead of the movement. As long as we continue to do that and make cults around our leaders, all they have to do to stop it any time we're making ground is just kill us off, kill off that leader.

PLAYBOY: What have you learned in your research for the Malcolm X movie?

LEE: That Malcolm was a very complex person. There were three or four different Malcolms. He was constantly evolving, his outlook and his ideology, and always trying to seek the truth. If he found it, he was not scared of being called a hypocrite. If he found a higher truth, he would say, "I was wrong. All that stuff I said before is wrong, and this is what I believe." That's something that very few people do

PLAYBOY: Have your feelings about him changed since you started doing the research?

LEE: I think that I've really grown to love Malcolm more. What he stood for and what he died for

PLAYBOY: What did you think when you first read his autobiography?

LEE: It was just a revelation. I have deep respect for Dr. King, but I've always been drawn more to Malcolm. I just cannot get with Dr. King's complete nonviolence philosophy.

PLAYBOY: Malcolm was moving in that direction himself, wasn't he?

LEE: No. Malcolm never moved away from defending oneself, the right to protect the self. He never moved away from that. Malcolm would never say, "Go to a march, get hit upside the head, and hopefully, after you get enough knocked upside the head, the white man will see how evil he is and will stop." He never said that, and he was never moving toward that. He's always been about the right to protect oneself. Malcolm never advocated violence. He said one should reserve the right to protect oneself.

PLAYBOY: Doesn't it seem interesting that there has finally come a time when a major studio will give you—

LEE: Yeah, 20 years and more since he's been dead and buried. He no longer seems such a threat. This film would not have been done in 1966, the year after he got assassinated. No way.

PLAYBOY: But look at what you get a chance to do now.

LEE: It's a great opportunity.

PLAYBOY: Are you up for it?

LEE: Yeah. Everything I've done has really prepared me for this film. It's led me in this direction. I've got no intention of dropping the ball.

SOPHIA JADE

Instagram @sophiasucc_ul

Photography by **Arthur St. John | @arthurstjohn**
HMUA **Taylor Jazz | @taylor_jazz**
Location **Serob Papazyan**

Welcome to the Playboy family! What does this mean to you? It means a lot to me to be part of the Playboy family. I have shot for a Playboy TV episode of a softcore show they did called The Rub in the past. It was a Halloween episode. Doing anything for Playboy has always been a pleasurable working experience for me. It's super exciting and an honor to be shown in one of the international editions!

What do you think of when it comes to Playboy and the iconic bunny? I think of the legacy of Hugh Hefner, Marilyn Monroe, Bettie Page and so many of the beautiful women as well as talented photographers they showcase.

Describe your photo shoot... It was awesome to finally get to work with Arthur St. John and his super talented MUA Taylor. They let me do a lot of my own wardrobe styling which is great because I haven't always been a fan of how I was styled at shoots in the past. Besides modeling, I have a fashion business so I think I know a thing or two about wardrobe so it's always nice to be trusted with that:)

Favorite movie? Favorite actor? Always been a bit of a cinephile myself so I have many. I have quite a few favorite film directors like Alejandro Jodorowsky, Dario Argento, Mario Bava, Gaspar Noe, and David Lynch. Tim Burton was a favorite of mine growing up as well since I identify with a lot of his characters. Hard for me to pick a favorite actor. One of my favorite movies ever is an animated one called Belladonna of Sadness.

What type of music do you mostly listen to? Just like with the films,music has been a big part of my life. Many of my friends are musicians so I have had lots of exposure and appreciation for lots of genres including jazz, classic rock, post punk, new wave, disco, and French pop.

What's your favorite color? Rainbow.

If you could eat only one food for the rest of your life, what would it be? Raw Oysters

Do you like to cook? If so, what's your speciality? Once in awhile, I like to do pasta or healthy seafood dishes.

Favorite cocktail? I like a straight good whiskey or a Mezcal Margarita for mixed drink.

If you could be any animal, what would you be and why? A spider because they weave amazing webs that remind me of an elaborate fashion sewing project.

Describe yourself using 3 adjectives... Eccentric, Brave, Patient.

How important is sex in a relationship? In certain types of relationships especially a romantic one, sexually compatibility is a must for it to stay romantic but I believe in all different types of love and in some cases, it's not about sex.

What turns you on the most? What turns you off?
Fearlessness is a turn on.
Jealousy is a turn off.

Any pet peeves?
People with bad manners.

If you could change any one thing in the world, what would it be and why? There's too much I'd like changed about humanity especially what's been going on these days. People need to learn to come together but it's getting further away from that lately.

Five Emerging Transgender and Nonbinary Leaders to Watch

This year for Transgender Awareness Week we celebrate five people working to give voice to the underheard, justice to the underserved—and laughter to us all

BY **MARY EMILY O'HARA**

This Friday marks the annual Trans Day of Remembrance, which since 1999 has memorialized members of the transgender community lost to violence and murder. Recent years have seen some LGBTQ leaders beginning to reorient the spirit of the day by referring to it as Trans Day of Resilience Empowering and protecting transgender and gender nonconforming lives doesn't just mean honoring the dead, but also celebrating the humanity of trans people through their accomplishments and victories. The concept of resilience doesn't stop at survival; powerful and talented trans pioneers continue to rise to the top of their fields across industries, from arts and entertainment to politics and activism.

To celebrate trans resilience, Playboy is spotlighting five emerging voices that should be on your radar. Each of the nonbinary and transgender leaders profiled here is not just changing the game, but also blazing a path for younger generations to follow.

Meredith Talusan. (Photo by Albrica Tierra)

The Diplomat

Meredith Talusan, author
Pronouns: they/she

Though they are best known as an award-winning journalist, Meredith Talusan has a master's degree in fiction. Now living in the woodlands of a small town in upstate New York, Talusan is returning to that form and working on their first novel. Small-town life has been an interesting change of pace for Talusan, who previously worked in the Condé Nast building in Manhattan as executive editor at Them, the publishing giant's LGBTQ digital magazine. Forest life might prompt culture shock for some city expats, but for Talusan, who grew up on a farm in the Philippines, it's a respite. The biggest change, Talusan says, is getting used to conservative neighbors.

"In America, going to a rural area also means being in an area that's a lot more white and a lot more conservative, and encountering people who are Trump supporters on a regular basis," Talusan says. "Some people are like, 'You're fine,' but they don't like trans people in general. And there's something important about that, about being around people who get to know you as a person, so hopefully you're having an impact."

Talusan's first book, Fairest, came out in May. The well-reviewed memoir examines what it means to be "an outcast among outcasts" as a trans immigrant with albinism. It's with that kind of intersectional lens that Talusan looks forward to the next year. "I am worried that we would feel complacent in a Democratic administration," Talusan says. "It's very important for us to continue to advocate and be activists for our concerns."

Kayla Gore. (Photo by TC Caldwell)

The Champion

Kayla Gore, community organizer
Pronouns: she/her

Kayla Gore might be one of the busiest people in Tennessee. She's the Southern regional organizer at the Transgender Law Center, the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging the state's policy against trans people changing the gender on their birth certificates, and the co-founder of My Sistah's House, a Memphis nonprofit that coordinates shelter services for trans people in need.

For much of the past year, Gore has been fund-raising to build a tiny-house community and introduce homeownership to the mostly Black transgender women the organization serves. So far, My Sistah's House has raised nearly two-thirds of its $450,000 goal. Gore says the pandemic hit the community especially hard. "They were out of work, the unemployment system was jammed and a lot of people got evicted before the moratorium," she says. "We started to think, How can we avoid this happening again?"

Gore's work is essential. Things many people take for granted, like safe housing and accurate birth certificates, can be life-saving for Black trans women. "There have been at least 34 murders of transgender people this year," Gore says. "These are lives lost, and there's nobody really doing anything about it."

Kai Choyce. (Photo courtesy Kai Choyce)

The Trickster

Kai Choyce, comedian
Pronouns: he/him

With the pandemic and resulting closure of live venues, it hasn't exactly been the easiest year for stand-up comedians. Kai Choyce may be the exception. The rising funnyman carved out some major 2020 highlights, thanks to some really good Covid jokes. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson shared one of them with his 15 million Twitter followers, and the rest went into Choyce's upcoming online quarantine special, Coronation.

What's the funniest thing to come out of the pandemic so far? "Definitely the week when a bunch of monkeys escaped a lab with samples of Covid, and it was somehow just a blip in the news cycle for 24 hours," he says. Choyce is preparing for another year of nightmares like "Covid-20" and "stronger, faster murder hornets." The pandemic has been hard on everyone, but pain is what feeds good comedy. "I have no shortage of worries," Choyce says. "It's what keeps me motivated to get shit done."

Although comedy has traditionally been an old (white, cisgender) boy's club, trans visibility in general has been growing—making it easier to "just create your own lane," Choyce says. He's been doing just that, in part through his popular weekly podcast, Women Who Kill, where guests discuss a different "murderer who happens to be a lady" each episode. And, of course, in part by being hella funny on the internet.

Taylor Small. (Photo by James Buck)

The Upstart

Taylor Small, Vermont state legislator
Pronouns: she/her

Four years ago, Taylor Small had just graduated from college. By day, she was running the health and wellness program at the Pride Center of Vermont; by night, she performed as local drag sensation Nikki Champagne. She'd considered a career in politics, but imagined it would come later in life. Fast forward to November 3, when Small became not only the first transgender person elected to Vermont's state legislature, but also one of the youngest state legislators in the nation, at just 26 years old.

"What is most exhilarating is the impact I'm hearing from young people, including young trans and gender nonconforming youth," Small says. "[They] are saying, 'Not only do I see a future for myself after years of discrimination, but I also see a path forward for myself into elected office.'"

Being a first-time candidate campaigning during a global pandemic was "like building a plane while flying it," Small says. Now that she's won a literal seat at the table, Small is focused on ensuring health care access for all—especially in light of the Supreme Court's current review of the Affordable Care Act.

"We have seen our communities here in Vermont losing their jobs and their access to health insurance," Small says. "Health care is a human right and should not just be a privilege."

Kit Yan. (Photo by Jess X. Snow)

The Scribe

Kit Yan, playwright and poet
Pronouns: they/he/she

This was supposed to be a big year for Kit Yan and their writing partner, Melissa Li. The two playwrights had debuted their musical, Interstate, on March 6 to rave reviews and sold-out houses. But after only about eight performances, the theater world shut down completely thanks to coronavirus. "Our next production was supposed to be in L.A.," hoping for a commercial path toward Broadway, Yan says. Instead, Yan's career—largely dependent upon live performance venues and travel—came to a sudden halt.

But the unexpected break has allowed Yan to focus on their own humanity outside the nonstop work that theater demands. "I might get a hysterectomy—a gender-confirming surgery—during the interim, and it wasn't something I would have been able to do if we'd still gone full-speed ahead," Yan says.

They've also been reconnecting with the roots of their commitment to trans storytelling. All Yan's plays and musicals feature transgender characters and actors.

"Putting trans stories and trans people on stage humanizes the trans experience in different ways than TV and film," they say. "When you're in a physical space watching a live performance, watching trans people speak, sitting among queer and trans people—it's a singular experience."

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